THE MOST RELIABLE USED CARS

HOW TO LOWER YOUR MEDICAL BILLS

THE BEST-TASTING VEGGIE BURGERS

JUNE 2022

CR Consumer Reports®

RATINGS & REVIEWS
- Air Conditioners
- Tires
- Smartphones
- Washers & Dryers
- Grills
- Generators
- Blenders
- Pots & Pans

BOOST YOUR BRAIN POWER AT ANY AGE

Superfoods, supplements, memory-building games: Here's what really helps preserve—and improve—your thinking skills

Build & Buy Car Buying Service

The right tool to help you find a new car!

Save money, access our prescreened network of dealers, and see CR recommendations along the way! The deal you want is out there—in fact, car buyers save an average of $1,942* off MSRP when they use the Build & Buy Car Buying Service®.

SEARCH for the car you want and see what others paid

LOCATE the dealership from our prescreened network of over 15,000

COMPARE real pricing from participating dealers

SAVE and drive home your car and your savings!

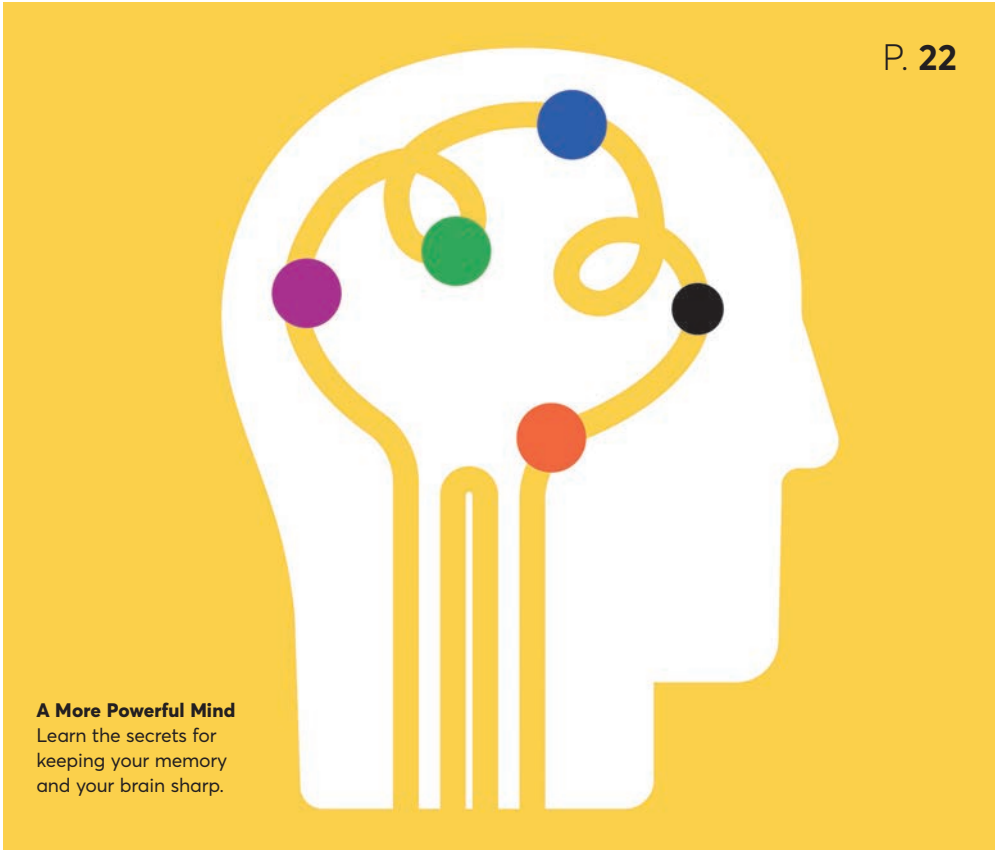
See how much YOU can save at **cr.org/buildandbuy**

CR Consumer Reports®

*Between 1/1/21 and 12/31/21, the average savings off MSRP experienced by consumers who connected with a TrueCar Certified Dealer through the Consumer Reports Build & Buy Program and who were identified as buying a new vehicle from that Certified Dealer was $1,942. Your actual savings may vary based on multiple factors, including the vehicle you select, region, dealer, and applicable vehicle-specific manufacturer incentives, which are subject to change. The MSRP is determined by the manufacturer and may not reflect the price at which vehicles are generally sold in the dealer's trade area, as many vehicles are sold below MSRP. Each dealer sets its own pricing.

Contents

JUNE 2022, VOL. 87 NO. 6



P. 22

A More Powerful Mind
Learn the secrets for keeping your memory and your brain sharp.

22 **Boost Your Brainpower at Any Age**
Memory-building games? Superfoods? Supplements? The strategies that really help to enhance your thinking skills.

30 **The Meat Lovers' Guide to Plant-Based Meat**
We tasted 32 faux burgers, nuggets, fillets, and sausages–and checked their nutrition levels, too. Here's what we found.
RATINGS

38 **The Remedy for Big Medical Bills**
Even insured people are facing huge healthcare expenses. We've got ways for you to save before–and after–you seek treatment.

44 **Best Pots & Pans From Our Tests**
Need to replace worn-out cookware? Our experts reveal the key pieces to get and the right steps for keeping them clean.
RATINGS

PRODUCTS RATED IN THIS ISSUE

BLENDERS
P. 8

HOME SECURITY CAMERAS
P. 9

GRILLS
P. 11

AIR CONDITIONERS
P. 12

HYUNDAI IONIQ 5
P. 57

Contents

Is That Used Car in Good Shape?
The seven things to inspect before you write that check.

P. 50

DEPARTMENTS & COLUMNS

8 What We're Testing in Our Labs ...
Generators, dehumidifiers, summer tires, and more.
RATINGS

10 Ask Our Experts
Whether membership stores like Costco and Sam's Club help you save on gas, what the "natural flavors" label means on packaged foods, and tips for removing laundry detergent buildup on clothing.

P. 14

11 CR Insights
How to find the perfect washer-dryer pair, the healthiest smoothies to order at fast-food chains, the best ways to wall-mount a TV, and more.
RATINGS

PRODUCT UPDATE

18 Get a Great Smartphone for Less
Need a new phone but don't want to spend a fortune? Our experts found phones with long battery life and big screens at prices you'll like.
RATINGS

FROM THE PRESIDENT

4 Buyer Aware: A Call to Action
CR's president and CEO writes about her exciting new book packed with empowering, savvy advice for consumers.

IN EVERY ISSUE

5 Building a Better World, Together
Getting PFAS out of food wrappers, pushing back against discriminatory pricing, and making cars more efficient.

6 Your Feedback
Readers' comments about our recent content.

17 Recalls

60 Index

61 Selling It

ROAD REPORT

49 Ahead of the Curve
Auto ratings, news, and advice.

50 Find a Great Used Car You'll Love
Get a good deal on a reliable pre-owned car right now.
RATINGS

56 What a Dash Cam Can Do for You
It could assist in insurance claims or help resolve an erroneous ticket.

57 Road Test
We rate the Hyundai Ioniq 5, Infiniti QX60, Jeep Wagoneer, and Ford Maverick.
RATINGS

ABOUT CONSUMER REPORTS Consumer Reports is an independent, nonprofit organization founded in 1936 that works side by side with consumers to create a safe, fair, and transparent marketplace. To achieve our mission, we test thousands of products and services in our labs each year and survey hundreds of thousands of consumers about their experiences with products and services. We pay for all the products we rate. We don't accept paid advertising.

In addition to our rigorous research, investigative journalism, and consumer advocacy, we work with other organizations, including media, consumer groups, research and testing consortiums, and philanthropic partners. We also license our content and data, as well as work with business partners to offer shopping and other consumer services, and may receive fees from these programs. We maintain a strict separation between our commercial operations and our testing and editorial operations. Our testing and editorial teams decide which products to test and review; our external business partners or other third parties do not dictate or control these decisions. Lastly, these partnerships and programs do not constitute CR's endorsement of any products or services.

For more information, go to **CR.org/about.**

HOW TO REACH US Write to us at Consumer Reports, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703, Attn.: Member Support. Or call 800-333-0663.

TO SEND A LETTER TO THE EDITOR Go to **CR.org/lettertoeditor.**

FOR NEWS TIPS & STORY IDEAS Go to **CR.org/tips.**

For **Selling It** send items to **SellingIt@cro.consumer.org.** See page 61 for more details.

ACCOUNT INFORMATION Go to **CR.org/magazine** or call 800-333-0663. See page 3 for more details.

RATINGS Overall Scores are based on a scale of 0 to 100. We rate products using these symbols:

POOR FAIR GOOD VERY GOOD EXCELLENT

On the road, in the labs, and by your side.

Since 1936, Consumer Reports has been fighting for consumers. Our work as a mission-driven nonprofit puts consumers first in everything we do–from product testing and rights protections to advocating for safety and health standards.

Learn more at
cr.org/SupportCR

CR

CRM26ASN

CR Consumer Reports®

Member Support You can call us about your membership or donations at **800-333-0663**.

Or go to CR.org/magazine to • Renew or pay for your current magazine • Give a gift • Change your address • Report a delivery problem • Cancel your magazine

Or write to us: Consumer Reports Member Support
P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298
Please include or copy address label from issue.
(Allow four to six weeks for processing.)

Price In U.S., $6.99 per issue, special issues $7.99. In Canada, $7.99 CAN per issue, special issues $8.99 CAN (Goods and Services Tax included, GST #127047702). All other countries add $10 per year to the U.S. price for shipping and handling.

Back Issues Single copies of previous 12 issues, $8.99 each; previous year's Buying Guide, $14.49 (includes shipping and handling). Please send payment to Consumer Reports, Attn.: Member Services, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703. Other ways to get Consumer Reports on the go: Apple News+, Google Play, Kindle, Nook, Readly, and Zinio.

Permissions Reproduction of Consumer Reports in whole or in part is forbidden without prior written permission (and is never permitted for advertising purposes). For questions about noncommercial, educational/academic uses of our content, please submit requests to **CR.org/licensing**.

Mailing Lists We exchange or rent our print postal mailing list so that it can be provided to other publications, companies, and nonprofit organizations that offer products or services through direct mail. If you wish to have your name deleted from our list, please send your address label with a request for deletion from outside use to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298. We do not exchange or rent email addresses. You can review our complete privacy policy regarding Consumer Reports information products, services, and programs at **CR.org/privacy.**

Consumer Reports (ISSN 0010-7174) is published monthly, except twice in December, by Consumer Reports, Inc., 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703. Periodicals postage paid at Yonkers, N.Y., and at other mailing offices; Canadian postage, at Mississauga, Ontario (Canadian publications registration number 2665247, agreement number 40015148).
Title Consumer Reports is a federally registered trademark in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Contents of this issue copyright © 2022 by Consumer Reports, Inc. All rights reserved under international and Pan-American copyright conventions.

CR's No Commercial Use Policy To view the policy, go to **CR.org/nocommercialuse.**

Contributions Consumer Reports is an independent 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that works side by side with consumers to create a fairer, safer, and healthier world. Contributions are tax-deductible in accordance with the law. Donations of commonly traded securities or real estate will be accepted and immediately converted to cash. For additional information, email **donorservices@cr.consumer.org.** To donate, please send your tax-deductible contribution to Consumer Reports, Attn.: Donor Services, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703 or go to **CR.org/donate.**

Charitable Gift Annuity Establishing a Consumer Reports Charitable Gift Annuity is an ideal way to accomplish your personal financial goals while supporting the mission of Consumer Reports. For additional information, please contact us at 877-275-3425 or **legacy@consumer.org.**

Consumer Reports' Staff operates under contract between Consumer Reports and The NewsGuild of New York Local 31003, CWA.

Members Send address changes to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298. If the post office alerts us that your magazines are undeliverable, we have no further obligation to fulfill your magazines unless we have a corrected address within two years.

POSTMASTER Send all UAA to CFS (see DMM 507.1.5.2).

NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES Send address corrections to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298.

CANADA POST If copies are undeliverable, return to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 481, STN MAIN, Markham, ON L3P 0C4.

Consumer Reports is a member of Consumers International, a federation of more than 220 consumer organizations from more than 115 countries working to protect and empower consumers throughout the world. For information, go to **consumersinternational.org.**

Please Remember CR in Your Will For information about how to make a bequest to Consumer Reports, please contact us at 877-275-3425 or **legacy@consumer.org.**

Buyer Aware: A Call to Action

SINCE 1936, Consumer Reports has worked hard to deliver the information consumers need to make smarter purchases, and we've worked equally hard to lift the veil on what is truly happening in our increasingly complex marketplace.

The powerful history of the consumer movement has many champions, but today we are at a crossroads, facing numerous threats, from the unchecked power of Big Tech companies to the countless safety concerns in the products people rely on. Our ability to grow consumer power—or not—will decide our future.

That's why I'm excited to share that my new book—"Buyer Aware: Harnessing Our Consumer Power for a Safe, Fair, and Transparent Marketplace"—will be published this September. It will provide the trusted advice you have come to expect from CR and explain how we can grow the untapped power of consumers to create a fair and just marketplace for all.

In the book, I detail the vital importance of consumer voice in an age that continues to place countless burdens on us. I include inspiring examples of people achieving real change and how CR is holding business and government accountable. I also share how my own passion for consumer rights grew from my life experiences.

The book is a guide to becoming a stronger, consumer-powered force that ensures our marketplace of tomorrow puts people before profits. You'll find advice on moves you can make now, like securing your personal data and avoiding financial tricks and traps, as well as collective actions we must take to rebalance the marketplace in favor of consumers.

You can get a first look or preorder the book at **BuyerAware.CR.org**. (All proceeds go to support Consumer Reports' nonprofit work.)

I look forward to hearing your reactions, thoughts, and stories.

Marta Tellado

Marta L. Tellado,
President and CEO
Follow me on Twitter
@MLTellado

CR Consumer Reports®

President and CEO Marta L. Tellado

Senior Vice President, Chief Operating Officer Leonora Wiener
Vice President, Chief Content Officer Gwendolyn Bounds

Editorial Director, Print Ellen Kunes
Deputy Editors, Print Amanda Lecky, Diane Umansky, Natalie van der Meer

Design Director Mike Smith **Creative Director, Brand** Young Kim
Associate Design Director Sheri Geller
Art Directors Tammy Morton Fernandez, Chiun Lee, Ewelina Mrowiec
Photo Editors Lacey Browne, Emilie Harjes, Karen Shinbaum

Senior Director, Content Development Glenn Derene
Deputy Director, Content Development Christopher Kirkpatrick
Associate Directors, Content Development Scott Billings, Althea Chang-Cook
Enterprise Kevin Doyle, Editor; Perry Santanachote, Writer/Reporter
Senior Director, Content Impact & Corporate Outreach Jen Shecter
Special Projects Joel Keehn, Director; Margot Gilman, Associate Director; Lisa L. Gill, Rachel Rabkin Peachman, Brian Vines, Deputies; Ryan Felton, Scott Medintz, Writers
Editorial Director, Digital Erle Norton
Senior Director, Product Testing Maria Rerecich
Associate General Counsel Camille Calman
Director, Lab Operations Lilian Kayizzi

CARS: ***Editors/Writers:*** Keith Barry, Jeff S. Bartlett, Jonathan Linkov, Mike Monticello, Benjamin Preston ***Auto Test Center:*** Jake Fisher, Senior Director; Jennifer Stockburger, Director ***Product Testing:*** Michael Bloch, Steve Elek, Kelly Funkhouser, Gordon Gingras, John Ibbotson, Alex Knizek, Anita Lam, Ryan Pszczolkowski, Mike Quincy, Gabriel Shenhar, Shawn Sinclair, Emily A. Thomas, Joe Veselak, Jenson Yuen

HEALTH & FOOD: Lauren F. Friedman, Content Lead ***Editors/Writers:*** Trisha Calvo, Kevin Loria, Catherine Roberts ***Policy Lead:*** Brian Ronholm

HOME & APPLIANCE: Sara Morrow, Content Lead ***Editors/Writers:*** Joanne Chen, Tanya A. Christian, Jennifer Cook, Mary Farrell, Keith Flamer, Paul Hope, Liam McCabe, Deb Silber, Tobie Stanger, Daniel Wroclawski ***Product Testing:*** John Galeotafiore, James Nanni, Testing Leads; John Banta, Susan Booth, Tara Casaregola, Lawrence Ciufo, Enrique de Paz, Bernard Deitrick, Cindy Fisher, Paolo Fu, Kathleen Halevah, Rich Handel, Misha Kollontai, Ginny Lui, Joan Muratore, Joseph Pacella, Christopher Regan, Frank Spinelli, Dave Trezza ***Market Analysts:*** Mark Allwood, Kelly Moomey, Courtney Pennicooke, Antonella Pomilla, Marion Wilson-Spencer

MONEY: ***Editor/Writer:*** Penelope Wang ***Policy Lead:*** Delicia Hand

TECH: Jerry Beilinson, Content Lead ***Editors/Writers:*** Octavio Blanco, Nicholas De Leon, Thomas Germain, Yael Grauer, Melanie Pinola, Chris Raymond, Allen St. John, Kaveh Waddell, James K. Willcox ***Product Testing:*** Richard Fisco, Glen Rockford, Michael Visconti, Testing Leads; Elias Arias, Antonette Asedillo, Steve Blair, Claudio Ciacci, Charles Davidman, Cody Feng, Bill Fitzgerald, Fred Garcia, Henry Parra, Richard Sulin, Maurice Wynn ***Market Analysts:*** Min Kim Bryant, Cesar Carroll, Odalys Grieco, Nish Suvarnakar ***Policy Lead:*** Justin Brookman

Chief Scientific Officer James H. Dickerson
Product Sustainability Shanika Whitehurst, Associate Director
Food Safety James E. Rogers, Director; Tunde Akinleye, Amy Keating, Sana Mujahid
Product Safety Ashita Kapoor, Associate Director; Juan A. Arguello

Content Operations Robert Kanell, Director
Copy Editing Leslie Monthan, Copy Chief; Noreen Browne, Alison France, Wendy Greenfield
Fact Checking & Research David Schipper, Associate Director; Tracy Anderman, Sarah Goralski, Christine Gordon, Karen Jacob
Planning & Production Nancy Crowfoot, Associate Director; Eric Norlander, Manager; Letitia Hughes, Terri Kazin, Aileen McCluskey
Premedia William Breglio, Associate Director; Eugene Chin, William Hunt, Anthony Terzo

Photography John Powers, John Walsh
Imaging Francisco Collado, Mark Linder

Chief Research Officer Kristen Purcell
Consumer Engagement Testing Charu Ahuja, Director; Linda Greene, Dana Keester, Paul Ritchey
Statistics & Data Science Debasmita Das, Kristen Dorrell, Dina Haner, Keith Newsom-Stewart
Survey Research Karen Jaffe, Simon Slater, Associate Directors; Noemi Altman, Dave Gopoian, Kendra Johnson, Debra Kalensky, Martin Lachter, Jane Manweiler, John McCowen, Adam Troy, Tian Wang, Tess Yanisch

Consumer Insight Frank Yang, Associate Director; Ipsita Arora
Member Support Sue Melfi, Director; Donna Murianka
Marketing Dawn Nelson, Senior Director
Procurement Operations Steven Schiavone, Associate Director
Administration Dawn Yancy Elleby

VICE PRESIDENTS: **Chief People Officer** Genea O. Bell; **Financial Planning & Analysis** JoAnne Boyd; **Chief Digital Officer** Jason Fox; **Chief Strategy Officer** Jessica Freireich; **Advocacy** David Friedman; **New Products & Services** Esther Han; **General Counsel** Michael Hubner; **Research, Testing & Insights** Liam McCormack; **Chief Diversity Officer** Rafael Pérez; **Chief Marketing Officer** Lauren Stanich; **Community & Corporate Engagement** Sharee McKenzie Taylor; **Chief Social Impact Officer** Shar Taylor; **SVP, Chief Financial Officer** Eric Wayne

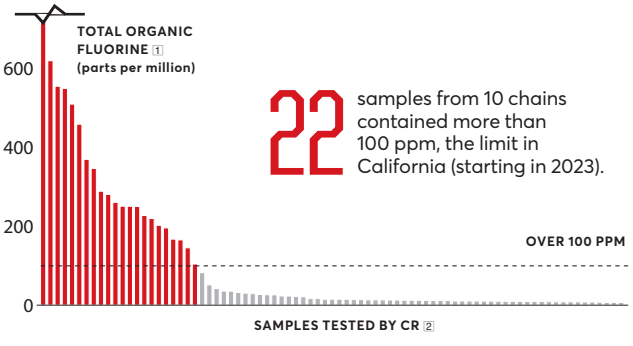
PHOTO: MELANIE DUNEA

Ridding Wrappers of PFAS

A recent CR investigation is already making consumers safer. As reported in our May issue, new CR tests found that food packaging used by many restaurant and grocery chains contains dangerous per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, which have been tied to a long list of health problems, including immune system disorders, low birth weights, and an increased risk of some cancers. PFAS are known to migrate from wrappers into the food we eat.

Within days of publication, several of the companies highlighted—Chick-fil-A, Nathan's Famous, and Restaurant Brands International, which owns Burger King, Popeye's, and Tim Horton's—publicly committed to reducing PFAS.

Now CR will make sure those brands follow through on their pledges—and work with companies and regulators to eliminate more sources of these dangerous chemicals. You can help by signing two petitions, one telling Arby's to rid its wrappers of PFAS (**CR.org/pfaspackaging**), the other urging Congress to ban PFAS in all food packaging (**CR.org/pfasact**).

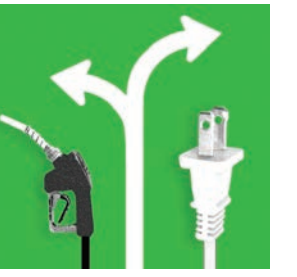


ILLUSTRATIONS: JOHN RITTER

GET INVOLVED

CR helped spotlight a recent study by Consumers International and the Mozilla Foundation finding that Tinder charged older users more to use certain dating app features. Tinder says it is stopping the practice. But many companies use similarly discriminatory algorithms based on factors like where customers live and education levels. Seven in 10 Americans oppose personalized pricing, according to a nationally representative CR survey of 2,341 adults in 2021. Sign our petition, at **CR.org/pricing**, urging Congress to require companies using pricing algorithms to make that information public.

Making Cars More Efficient



WHAT'S AT STAKE

In 2013, the Environmental Protection Agency granted California a "waiver" to enact auto emissions standards and a zero-emissions vehicle mandate that were more stringent than federal rules.

Sixteen other states subsequently piggybacked on the waiver and adopted the California standards. These rules not only will result in cleaner air and reduce global warming pollution but also will help drivers save money and ensure that consumers in these states have access to the clean cars they want.

By March 2022, the rules would have applied to more than a third of the U.S. population and almost 40 percent of the U.S. car market. But in 2019 the EPA revoked the waiver.

HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

CR spent the next two years fighting to restore it. Our mobilization team recruited four CR members to testify in favor of the waiver at a June EPA hearing. And in July 2021, we submitted formal comments to the EPA, along with 48,599 consumer signatures in support of giving states the authority to set their own clean car standards.

This past March, the EPA reinstated the waiver. "It's critically important that states have this authority, both for times when the federal government fails to act and when it rolls back standards," says Quinta Warren, PhD, CR's associate director of sustainability policy.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Sign our petition urging 15 state attorneys general to end their lawsuit challenging the federal Clean Car rule, at **CR.org/cleancars**. You can also learn more about the incentives available to purchasers of electric cars at **CR.org/incentives**.

[1] Testing for total organic fluorine was used to determine PFAS content.
[2] Not shown: Thirty-seven products with no organic fluorine detected.

Our annual Auto Issue (April 2022) revealed our 10 Top Picks, great used-car deals, and what makes cars safer to drive. But **"Time to Go Electric?"**–our look at the new EVs–really captured your attention. To add your thoughts, go to **CR.org/goelectric**.

I APPRECIATE YOUR 2022 auto issue and especially the section about electric vehicles. I've read many pros and cons on these. But nowhere have I read about the expected longevity of their batteries. Every chargeable device I own loses battery strength over time, and many quit accepting a full charge (sometimes in just a few years). I know that a well-maintained gas engine can last for years. What about electric vehicles? What can we expect?
–Sam Perschau
West Des Moines, IA

WRITE

Go to CR.org/lettertoeditor to share your comments for publication.

EDITOR'S NOTE *With early EV models, there was degradation in battery capacity over a period of eight years. But battery management has been evolving so that with newer EVs, battery degradation is expected to be less of an issue. In fact, it's rare for an EV to require its entire battery to be replaced. Instead, it's possible to change out individual battery cells that aren't charging fully anymore.*

"TIME TO GO ELECTRIC?" fails to address the use of E-cars in northern climates, except for a brief "con" statement: "Very cold or hot temperatures and cabin climate conditioning reduce driving range." This provides little or no incentive to people living in the northern tier who encounter consecutive months of cold and snowy conditions requiring heat, wipers, headlights, seat warmers, etc., in addition to the effects of sitting outside overnight in frigid conditions on battery longevity and efficiency. How much of a mileage reduction? Is charging slower in cold temperatures? And this sounds naive, but who pays for e-charging stations when "filling up"?
–Mark Behar, Milwaukee

EDITOR'S NOTE *When we've tested EV range on winter days at our track, we've found that extreme cold (below 20° F) cut the range almost in half for short trips in succession (20 miles at a time). Our auto testers are in the midst of updating range measurements for cold and warm temperatures, which will allow us to quantify the range reduction in cold weather better. One important note: There's a reduction in charging speed if you do it outside in cold weather instead of in a garage. Regarding charging prices: DC-Fast charging, which you might find at a rest area while on a long trip, costs drivers 43 cents per kWh on the Electrify America network. We recently paid 28 cents per kWh on Tesla's network of Superchargers.*

GIVEN THE LATEST IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] report, it is irresponsible in the extreme to purchase an internal combustion engine car. Particularly from a "consumer" perspective, as the resale value of these dinosaurs will approach zero as fuel prices rise and the advantages of electric driving become more patently obvious. We have a very narrow window to avoid the catastrophe that continuing burning fossil fuels will bring about. It's really time to step up and put our consumer dollars toward the future.
–James R. Hare, via CR.org

THERE IS AN existing tax incentive for purchasing new electric vehicles, but as far as I can tell, not for new and especially used hybrids. New electric cars are very expensive, and they are too new to have a supply of used ones, but hybrids have been around for many years now and are available on the used-car market. But I believe there is no such tax incentive for fuel-efficient used hybrids. Should we not use every incentive to get fuel-guzzling cars out of circulation? Fuel efficiency reduces medically harmful air pollution and reduces the race to dangerous

climate change. Fuel efficiency also reduces dependence on foreign fossil fuels. Every little bit counts, and too many people cannot afford new cars, especially the new electric cars. So only those who can afford expensive new cars get a break.
–Dan Tong, Chicago

BEFORE WE ALL go crazy for EVs, has anyone done the calculations on the available power to charge them? At 6 p.m. in August in N.Y., N.J., and Conn., when everyone arrives home and plugs in their vehicles, what will happen?
–Robert Schwab, New Berlin, NY

EDITOR'S NOTE *Experts at Department of Energy research labs estimate that when most cars and trucks on the road become electrified, electricity demand will increase by about 25 percent. But even the most optimistic scenarios for the EV transition show it will take until about 2050 for most vehicles on the road to be electric. That means utilities have time to plan and expand to support that increase. As for all EV owners plugging in at once: Most utilities already offer special rates for charging your vehicle when electricity demand is low. Many home chargers and electric vehicles also allow you to schedule when your vehicle charges through an app. There's also "smart charging" technology that designates when vehicles can charge to minimize stress on the grid while ensuring that all vehicles are fully charged when they're needed. Widespread use of smart charging technology for EVs could in fact help protect the grid more from unexpected failures.*

IS THE [TOYOTA] RAV4 Prime (featured in "10 Top Picks") readily available in the U.S.? Here in Canada, the order lead time can be a couple of years.
–Richard Tench, via CR.org

EDITOR'S NOTE *The RAV4 Prime is in high demand but in short supply, with many sales going above MSRP. We checked several states for availability and found a handful. Buyers who want a RAV4 Prime will want to act quickly when they find one with the features they're looking for, and be willing to pay over the sticker price.*

CONNECT WITH US

FACEBOOK
fb.com/consumerreports
fb.com/SomosCR

YOUTUBE
/consumerreports

INSTAGRAM
@consumerreports

TWITTER
@consumerreports
@SomosCR

PINTEREST
/consumerreports

LINKEDIN
/company/consumer-reports

GET SAVVY ABOUT SCAMS

YOU LEFT OUT a biggie in your "Scams Are on the Rise" report (March 2022). It's a variation of the "you owe us money" type, with the twist being "we owe you money." The setup is a fake invoice reflecting a supposed purchase of an expensive item using your credit card. Big letters say "If you didn't order this item, please call this number." The target of the scam calls the "vendor" to report the "fraudulent" purchase and gives information about which credit card the refund should be applied to.
–Roy Lasris, Seaford, VA

I HAVE RECEIVED numerous phone calls offering me 50 percent off my TV service bill–if I paid 6 months up front and with gift cards (definitely a scam). The scary part was they knew part of my account number, where I lived, and my phone number.
–Gary Randolph, Warrenton, VA

I FOUND YOUR scams article very informative. Of course, we know that scammers exist, but sometimes it's easier to trust than mistrust. I will certainly follow you on Twitter for more advice [on avoiding scams].
–Claudia Chiomenti, via CR.org

WHICH USES MORE GAS—HAVING THE A/C ON OR KEEPING WINDOWS OPEN?

Re: How to Stretch a Tank of Gas (April 2022), I read that the drag from open windows if you are driving above 35-40 mph is worse than the use of the air conditioning [for fuel consumption]. Do you know anything about that?
—Wendy E. Kleiner, via CR.org

Using an inline fuel meter that precisely measures gas consumption, we tested air conditioning vs. leaving the windows down in a Ford Focus, Honda Accord, and Subaru Forester. We found that driving with the A/C on consumed slightly more fuel than just cracking the windows, though at higher speeds of about 65 mph, the difference between the two was negligible. So technically, leaving windows open uses less gas. But we think that on a very hot day, the added comfort from the A/C is worth the slight rise in fuel consumption.

CHOOSING E-BIKES

KUDOS TO CR for your electric bike article ("The Right Electric Bike for You," March 2022). I have ridden an e-bike for years. The technology and fun factor are great. The pedal assist allowed me, in my old age, to ride 36 miles round trip to work, returning home against a 25-30 mph north wind off the Pacific Ocean. They are well worth the money. One caveat when buying an e-bike: The tires matter. Due to the extra weight of the battery and motor, and increased power, the tires should be e-bike-rated and very puncture-resistant. Repairing a flat tire on the road, especially with a hub motor, can be difficult.
–Martin Smukler, McKinleyville, CA

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON SCHNEIDER

What We're Testing in Our Labs ...

In our 63 labs, we continually review and rate products. Here, timely picks for this month.

Blenders

WE TESTED: 75 models
WE TEST FOR: How well a blender can crush ice and make frozen drinks, how well it can purée soup, ease of use, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 67
Range: 26-88

EXCELLENT SMOOTHIE MAKER WITH A 7-YEAR WARRANTY
Vitamix 5200
$450

84 OVERALL SCORE

RELIABLE BRAND & GREAT AT PURÉEING
Wolf Gourmet High Performance WGBL100S
$700

79 OVERALL SCORE

STELLAR PERFORMER AT A BARGAIN PRICE
Instant Ace
$120

77 OVERALL SCORE

Inverter Generators

WE TESTED: 20 models
WE TEST FOR: A generator's ability to deliver power with consistent voltage and deal with surges in power demand, how easy it is to use, noise level, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 69
Range: 32-85

BUDGET-FRIENDLY MIDSIZED MODEL
Ryobi RYi4022X (3,400 watts)
$600

84 OVERALL SCORE

POWERFUL & LARGE
Predator 9500 With CO Secure (7,600 watts)
$2,300

79 OVERALL SCORE

SMART SPACE SAVER
DeWalt DXGNI2200 (1,700 watts)
$650

75 OVERALL SCORE

Ask Our Experts

Are small inverter generators powerful enough to help out in a power outage?

THOSE COMPACT INVERTER GENERATORS (usually about a foot wide) are often thought of as a great portable power source for camping or tailgating. But they're also a big help during an outage. Most offer between 1,000 and 2,000 watts—enough to power your fridge (700 watts), about five lights (250 watts), a laptop (200 watts), and a plug-in fan or phone charger (20 watts) at the same time for up to 10 or so hours per tank. If you need to run more appliances, or you're hoping to power a window air conditioner (at least 1,000 watts) or a sump pump (900 watts) along with your fridge, you'll be better off with a midsized generator, such as the Ryobi above, which offers more power (3,400 watts) for about the same price as smaller models.

ILLUSTRATION: SERGE BLOCH

For the latest ratings of these and other product categories, readers with a Digital or All Access membership can go to **CR.org**.

Dehumidifiers

WE TESTED: 49 models
WE TEST FOR: The model's ability to remove water from the air when it's 65° F with 60 percent humidity, the accuracy of the humidistat feature, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 67
Range: 30-81

LARGE CAPACITY AT A NICE PRICE
GE ADEW45LY (Walmart)
$230

80 OVERALL SCORE

GREAT FOR SMALL ROOMS
TCL TDW20E20
$150

77 OVERALL SCORE

QUIET & MIDSIZED
Toshiba TDDP3512ES2
$170

74 OVERALL SCORE

Home Security Camera Deals

WE TESTED: 44 wireless models
WE TEST FOR: Video quality, how well the smart features work, how quickly homeowners are alerted when motion is detected, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 61
Range: 42-81

TOP VALUE
Lorex 2K Pan-Tilt WiFi W462AQC-E
$70

74 OVERALL SCORE

SPEEDY NOTIFICATIONS
TP-Link Kasa Cam KC120
$50

73 OVERALL SCORE

WORKS WITH APPLE HOMEKIT
Eufy Solo IndoorCam C24
$40

72 OVERALL SCORE

Electric String Trimmers

WE TESTED: 44 battery and corded-electric models
WE TEST FOR: How quickly and neatly models trim and edge grass around walkways, ability to cut through weeds, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 80
Range: 42-92

BEST BATTERY TRIMMER
Ego ST1502SA
$200

92 OVERALL SCORE

LIGHTWEIGHT BATTERY TRIMMER FOR LESS
Kobalt (Lowe's) KST 4024A-03
$150

88 OVERALL SCORE

TOP CORDED TRIMMER
Ryobi RY41135
$90

77 OVERALL SCORE

Summer Tires

WE TESTED: 23 ultra-high-performance models
WE TEST FOR: Braking in both dry and wet conditions, handling, ride comfort, noise, rolling resistance, tread life, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 67
Range: 57-76

BEST PERFORMANCE OVERALL
Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S
$222

76 OVERALL SCORE

SUPER-QUIET RIDE
Continental ExtremeContact Sport
$176

75 OVERALL SCORE

GREAT PRICE
General G-Max RS
$139

75 OVERALL SCORE

Note: *We rate different products according to different testing protocols; as a result, Overall Scores of one product category are not comparable with those of another.*

COMING NEXT MONTH Paints and More

Should I become a member of Costco or Sam's Club to save money on gas?

IT'S PROBABLY a good idea. At these membership clubs, which include BJ's, Costco, Sam's Club, and others, you'll typically pay 5 to 25 cents per gallon less than the average price at other gas stations. That's a big savings, given the sharp rise in gas prices (recently as high as $5.91 per gallon in California). It's likely that over the course of a year of driving, the savings would even cover the cost of these clubs' annual membership fees (which range from $45 to $120 per year).

You can save even more by signing up for a warehouse club's credit card because they can be used at any gas station that takes major credit cards. Costco's Visa credit card pays 4 percent back on gas purchases at any gas station up to $7,000 per year. Sam's Club offers a Mastercard that pays 5 percent cash back up to a $6,000 annual cap. Plus, Costco stations offer Top Tier gasoline, meaning their gas meets higher-than-required detergent standards. Filling up with Top Tier gas can help keep an engine running smoothly, according to one AAA study.

Keep in mind that with so many people looking to save on gas, there can be long lines at these discounted pumps. But there's little risk to trying out a membership: BJ's, Costco, and Sam's Club will let you cancel at any time and get a refund for the unused months of your membership.

LEARN

We have more than 140 in-house experts who research, test, and compare. Submit your questions at CR.org/askourexperts ... and watch for the answers.

Are those 'natural flavors' touted on soda labels better for me than artificial ones?

NOT NECESSARILY. According to Michael Hansen, PhD, senior scientist at CR, "There's no real difference between natural and artificial flavors in terms of nutrition."

"Natural flavors," as defined by the Food and Drug Administration, means that a flavoring comes from a plant or animal source—but those flavors aren't always derived from the ingredient whose taste they mimic. Scientists extract chemicals from these natural sources in the lab, but they can use synthetic solvents and artificial preservatives and processing aids to do that. (The natural flavors used in organic foods may be preferable because organic regulations state that they can't be made with synthetic solvents or artificial preservatives.) Creating an artificial flavor is a similar process: The only difference is that the flavor compounds are developed in a lab rather than taken from a plant or an animal.

Both natural and artificial flavors are probably safe for most of us to consume, Hansen says. But because the specific ingredients generally aren't reviewed by the FDA—and companies are usually not required to disclose the ingredients of natural or artificial flavors on food labels—it's difficult to know for sure. For this reason, people with food allergies should be particularly careful when consuming food or drinks that have either natural or artificial flavorings.

Why do some of my clothes have white streaks after I wash them? Am I using the wrong detergent?

IT MIGHT NOT be the brand of detergent you're using but how much of it you're adding to your wash load. You might be using too much concentrated detergent or fabric softener per load (especially when combined with the low water levels in today's more efficient washing machines). Other reasons may include incomplete rinsing, hard water, and an overloaded washing machine. When you load a washer with too much laundry, the items don't agitate one another sufficiently, which is what helps to remove dirt and detergent residue. That chalky residue left over from detergents can also result in itching and rashes if you have allergies or sensitive skin.

To remove detergent buildup from your laundry, put clothing and other items—without detergent—into a rinse-and-spin cycle if you have a front-loader, or a deep-soak-and-spin if your machine is a top-loader, says Rich Handel, CR's washing machine expert. And to prevent buildup in the future, cut back on the amount of detergent you use. (Try using just 1.5 ounces of detergent per load to start.) Use less fabric softener, too—or skip it altogether—because a little can remain embedded in fabrics. Finally, don't overload your washing machine.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SERGE BLOCH

CR Insights

IN THE KNOW

How to Grill the Perfect Burger

EVERY YEAR, OUR EXPERTS rigorously test dozens of new grills to help you find the very best equipment to suit your cookout style. (We've hand-picked some top performers here that you're sure to love.) But if you're in pursuit of a perfectly cooked burger, you'll need more than a great grill; you'll also want a time-tested recipe and method.

CR's grilling expert and trained culinary chef Paul Hope has made thousands of burgers in his quest for perfection. Here are his best tips.

CRAFT A GREAT PATTY For beef burgers, Hope typically uses 80 percent lean/20 percent fat ground beef patties. Shape the meat into 5-ounce patties (roughly 4 inches across). Then make a slight indentation on the top center of each one with your thumb, which keeps the patties from shrinking while cooking.

KEEP THEM CHILLED Not ready to grill yet? Put the patties in the fridge to minimize any threat of bacteria—especially on a hot day. Plus, refrigerating patties for 30 minutes before cooking can help them retain their shape on the grill.

PREHEAT If you're using a gas grill, set it to medium heat (300° to 400° F), close the lid, and wait 10 minutes. "The patties cook more quickly and consistently if you preheat," Hope says.

BEFORE YOU FLIP THEM Right before the burgers hit the grill, sprinkle salt and pepper on one side of each patty and place that side down on the grill first. As they cook, season the other side before flipping. (Seasoning a patty too far in advance pulls liquid from the meat, producing a dry burger.) They should take about 3 to 4 minutes per side for a juicy but well-cooked burger with distinct grill marks.

80 OVERALL SCORE

MIDSIZED GAS GRILL

Even Embers GAS8560AS $565

74 OVERALL SCORE

ON-THE-GO GRILLING

Coleman Roadtrip 285 $290

70 OVERALL SCORE

CERAMIC GRILL

Pit Boss K22 Ceramic Charcoal Grill 71220 $860

67 OVERALL SCORE

BUDGET-FRIENDLY CHARCOAL

Weber 22" 14402001 $240

ILLUSTRATIONS: RODRIGO DAMANTI. PHOTOS, BURGERS: GETTY IMAGES

Interested in grilling with plant-based products? Turn to page 30 of this issue to learn more about them.

SAVVY SHOPPER

The Right Air Conditioner for Your Space

WHEN LOOKING FOR a window air conditioner, don't just seek out the highest number of British thermal units, or Btu. Instead, calculate the size of the space you want to cool, our experts say. That's because a powerful air conditioner placed in a small room cools it so quickly that it doesn't have time to remove enough moisture from the air, leaving you with a cold, clammy space rather than a cool, dry one.

To find the ideal power level for any room, multiply the length of the room by the width to get an approximate square footage, then match that number with the small, medium, and large Btu range approximations shown at right–along with some nicely priced models we've tested. If more than two people regularly occupy the room, add 600 Btu for each additional person. And if the unit is for a kitchen, add 4,000 Btu (because ranges add a fair amount of heat).

	SMALL ROOM 100 to 250 sq. ft. 5,000 to 6,500 Btu	MEDIUM ROOM 250 to 350 sq. ft. 7,000 to 8,500 Btu	LARGE ROOM 350 to 550 sq. ft. 9,800 to 12,500 Btu
	$ Midea MAW06R1YWT 73 OVERALL SCORE	TCL TAW08CRNW0W (Walmart) 62 OVERALL SCORE	Haier QHNG10AA (Target) 71 OVERALL SCORE
PRICE	$220	$240	$310
BTU/HR.	6,000	8,000	10,000
COMFORT	4/5	3/5	4/5
EASE OF USE	4/5	4/5	4/5
BROWNOUT*	5/5	5/5	5/5
INDOOR NOISE, LOW	4/5	3/5	3/5
INDOOR NOISE, HIGH	3/5	2/5	3/5

*This test gauges the unit's ability to run and restart during periods of extreme heat and low voltage.

*For more ratings, Digital and All Access members can go to **CR.org/windowac**.*

PHOTOS, BOTTOM LEFT TO RIGHT: LE CREUSET; CONSUMER REPORTS; LODGE CAST IRON; CONSUMER REPORTS; MARTHA STEWART

CR Time Traveler POTS & PANS

1925 The Le Creuset foundry opens in France and forges its original cast-iron Dutch oven coated in colorful enamel. The first color created is called "Volcanique"–now the company's signature "Flame."

1940 CR publishes "Look Before You Cook," a recipe collection that includes expert advice on caring for pots and pans.

1956 T-fal is founded, and soon becomes the first creator of nonstick frying pans, according to company lore.

1967 In CR's tests of over 80 pots and pans, the lowest-rated ones don't heat evenly, serving up pancakes with uncooked centers and burned edges.

1972 Fondue pots are hot. We test electric ones and recommend a $20 Wards pot for its convenience and safety.

POOR – EXCELLENT | RECOMMENDED | CR BEST BUY

GREEN THUMB GUIDE

SMART TIPS FOR GROWING YOUR OWN HERBS

DREAMING OF SIPPING mojitos with fresh mint this summer? It's easy to grow your own mint, and it's also a great money saver: Organic mint leaves, for example, can cost $4 an ounce at Walmart, while a mint plant sells for about $7—and should provide fresh leaves all season long if properly cared for. Use these quick tips to start your edible garden and keep it thriving.

Know Your Sun Level
Before you buy starter plants (or seeds), assess how much direct sunlight will hit your intended planting spot. Many herbs need "full sun," which means at least 6 hours of sun each day. An herb that specifies "partial sun/shade" requires between 3 and 6 hours of sun. For example, basil does well in a full 6 to 8 hours of sun, while mint likes a little less sun—only 4 or 5 hours.

Keep Herbs Separated
If you plant more than one type of herb, keep each one in its own patch or pot because watering needs differ. Basil, for example, benefits from consistently moist soil. Separation also helps to keep quickly spreading herbs, such as mint, from overtaking other plants. (Mint should always be planted in a pot because its roots can spread so rapidly.)

Promote Good Drainage
If you're using pots, pick ones with a drainage hole that sits on top of a reservoir to catch excess water. You can also put a few rocks at the bottom of the pot to help soil drain better and prevent root rot.

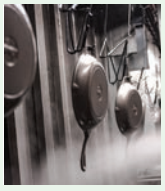
Strengthen Your Soil
Adding your own compost to the soil around herbs is a great way to keep it rich and moist. You can compost even if you have no outdoor space: Consider a compact composter, like the Bionicraft Biovessel Composter, $199. It works well and easily fits on a countertop or shelf. For new plants, add a 2-inch layer on top of the beds to start; then add small amounts (perhaps a handful of compost) once a month or so.

Beware of Heavy Metals
If you intend to plant your herbs outside, it's important to find out whether there are heavy metals, such as lead, in your local soil and water, because they can find their way into your herbs. You can buy a soil testing kit at many hardware stores or online. (For advice on testing and filtering your water, go to **CR.org/watertest**.) If you're buying soil for your herbs, look for a product that carries the OMRI Listed seal, which means it has been assessed for heavy metals by the Organic Materials Review Institute.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

1981 We test cookware made for microwave ovens and find that shape matters: Round pans are best; the corners of rectangular pans overcook food.

1990 Electric ranges now offer solid "disk" burners, but we discover that if the bottom of a pan isn't as straight as a ruler, it won't heat well.



2002 Lodge Cast Iron debuts new pre-seasoned cast-iron pans by baking soybean oil into them at its foundry to prevent rust.

2011 CR investigates reports of glass bakeware shattering. We test a few brands by heating glass pans to 450° F, then placing them on a wet surface—causing some to shatter.

2022 We test celebrity cookware and find that some lines are good, others not so much. One of the better pans is from Martha Stewart, above.

Martha Stewart Collection Hard Enameled $40

For our most current cookware ratings, turn to "Best Pots & Pans From Our Tests," on page 44.

DINING OUT

SECRETS TO HEALTHIER SMOOTHIES

FOR A FAST, nutritious snack or meal, a smoothie may seem like a good idea. But many of the concoctions on menus at smoothie and other fast-food chains may not be all that healthy. In fact, in our evaluation of the smoothie offerings at four chains, the good-for-you options were surprisingly hard to find.

"The ideal smoothie is made with whole fruits and vegetables, unsweetened dairy or plant milk or yogurt, and maybe some healthy add-ins like nut butters or seeds," says CR nutritionist Amy Keating, RD. But many smoothies we evaluated contained loads of added sugars such as agave, sweetened plant milks, and raw sugar.

"Unfortunately, chain restaurants aren't required to list the amount of added sugars they use," Keating says. (Of the chains we looked at, only Smoothie King listed added sugars on its website.) So it's hard to tell whether your smoothie's sugar content is coming from natural sources like fruit or other less healthy ingredients.

To help you make better choices, our experts share three key tips for smarter ordering and some good menu picks.

› **Look for whole fruits and veggies in the ingredients list.** A drink that lists whole produce first is your best bet. Fruit purées, like those in the Panera Bread drink at right, can be a fine choice, too. Fruit juices aren't a bad option, as long as they are 100 percent juice, which contains no added sugars.

› **Make substitutions.** Some chains—particularly those that specialize in smoothies—may be amenable to making ingredient swaps. "When you see a sweetener like agave, ask to leave it out or replace it with some fresh pineapple to add sweetness instead," says Keating.

› **Skip the add-on "boosts."** Some chains offer "boosts," "supplements," and "enhancers" but often don't disclose exactly what's in them, and they're generally not necessary. "If a smoothie is mostly produce, you'll be getting a variety of nutrients already," Keating says.

JAMBA

Strawberries Gone Bananas

Serving size: 10 ounces

Contains: Apple-strawberry 100 percent juice blend, frozen strawberries, frozen bananas.

CALORIES	150
SAT. FAT	0 g
CARBS	36 g
TOTAL SUGARS	27 g
FIBER	3 g
PROTEIN	1 g

WHY WE LIKE IT This kids' menu smoothie is smaller than the chain's 16-ounce small, which keeps calories low. It's made with juice and fruit—no added sugars. Ask to add in a protein-containing whole-food like nonfat Greek yogurt or peanut butter to make it more satisfying.

TROPICAL SMOOTHIE CAFÉ

Detox Island Green

Serving size: 24 ounces

Contains: Spinach, kale, mango, pineapple, banana, fresh ginger.

CALORIES	180
SAT. FAT	0 g
CARBS	43 g
TOTAL SUGARS	29 g
FIBER	5 g
PROTEIN	4 g

WHY WE LIKE IT This was the only smoothie on this chain's menu that did not contain turbinado sugar (raw sugar). This drink won't "detox" you, but it is made from all produce (no juice). If you order other smoothies on this chain's menu, ask to leave out the added sugar.

SMOOTHIE KING

Veggie Lemon Ginger Spinach

Serving size: 20 ounces

Contains: Mango, pineapple, papaya juice blend, white grape/lemon juice blend, stevia, and organic spinach, carrots, kale, and ginger.

CALORIES	310
SAT. FAT	0 g
CARBS	80 g
TOTAL SUGARS	60 g
FIBER	6 g
PROTEIN	4 g

WHY WE LIKE IT This veggie pick is found on the chain's "Be Well Blends" menu, which mostly offers smoothies made with whole fruit and fruit juices with no added sugars (but note that this blend contains stevia, a plant-based—but highly processed—sweetener).

PANERA BREAD

Peach & Blueberry Smoothie

Serving size: 16 ounces

Contains: Mango and peach purées, white grape and passion fruit juice concentrates, unsweetened almond milk, fresh blueberries.

CALORIES	210
SAT. FAT	2 g
CARBS	49 g
TOTAL SUGARS	41 g
FIBER	4 g
PROTEIN	2 g

WHY WE LIKE IT This smoothie is a good pick because it has whole fruit in it and fruit juice with no added sugars. Panera's Strawberry Banana smoothie is another nice option on this menu: It's made with whole-milk Greek yogurt and has 7 grams of protein.

PHOTOS: JAMBA JUICE; TROPICAL SMOOTHIE CAFÉ; SMOOTHIE KING; PANERA BREAD

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Find a Great Washer-Dryer Pair

IF YOU'RE LOOKING to update your laundry room, there's no question that a matching washing machine and dryer from the same brand and model line will look great together. But there are other benefits to choosing a matched pair, says Rich Handel, the CR engineer who oversees our washer testing program.

Today's matching pairs have smart features, including ones that automatically "sync" their settings. One set we've seen, for example, offers a dryer that auto-detects the setting you chose on the washer and then preselects a drying cycle to match it. That way, whether you're doing a load of bulky bed linens or small delicates, all you need to do is transfer the items from washer to dryer and hit start. And some new stackable sets offer a connector cable that puts controls for both the washer and dryer on the washer so that you don't have to reach up high to access the dryer's controls.

Choosing both appliances from the same manufacturer can also offer an advantage when it comes to repairs and warranties, says Handel. It's just simpler to deal with one company instead of two. There can be a price advantage, too, if you're shopping for both a washer and dryer: Retailers sometimes put matching pairs on sale as a unit, so you'll pay less buying them together.

One important question to consider though: Should you ever replace both your washer and dryer when only one of them breaks down? The answer depends a lot on the age of your machines. If your washer, for example, conks out around the 10-year mark but your 10-year-old dryer is still running (in CR member surveys, we've found that washers and dryers tend to last 10 years, on average), it may make sense to replace both so that you can reap the benefits of the newest washer/dryer technology (including improved energy efficiency) and any potential discount you might get for purchasing a set. But if your current dryer is a few years younger than your broken washer and you've been happy with the brand, you may wish to seek out–if possible–the closest model to your dryer from that same company. Keep in mind that newer models might not match the look of your current dryer. (It's also a good idea to check out the best performing, most reliable washers in CR's ratings, regardless of make and model.)

To help jump-start your search for the perfect pair, consider the four sets shown here–many of which are made by LG, which dominates the top spots in our washer-dryer set ratings.

EXCELLENT FRONT-LOADERS

FRONT-LOAD STACKABLE WASHER
LG WM4000HWA
$850
87 OVERALL SCORE

ELECTRIC STACKABLE DRYER
LG DLEX4000W
$850
88 OVERALL SCORE

TERRIFIC TOP-LOADER & DRYER

HIGH-EFFICIENCY TOP-LOAD WASHER
LG WT900HBA
$1,100
83 OVERALL SCORE

ELECTRIC DRYER
LG LEX7900BE
$1,100
87 OVERALL SCORE

TOP-LOADER & DRYER FOR LESS

HIGH-EFFICIENCY TOP-LOAD WASHER
LG WT7100CW
$800
82 OVERALL SCORE

ELECTRIC DRYER
LG DLE7100W
$800
88 OVERALL SCORE

FRONT-LOADERS FOR LESS

FRONT-LOAD STACKABLE WASHER
Samsung WF45T6200AW
$750
81 OVERALL SCORE

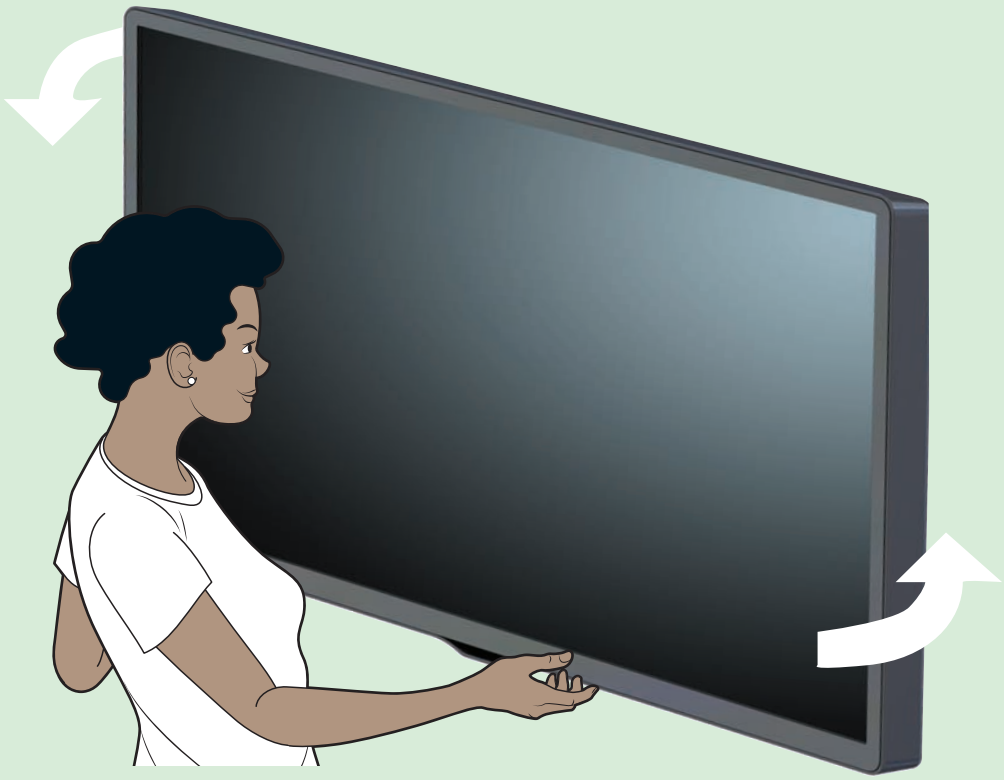
ELECTRIC STACKABLE DRYER
Samsung DVE45T6200W
$695
77 OVERALL SCORE

PHOTO, TOP: LG

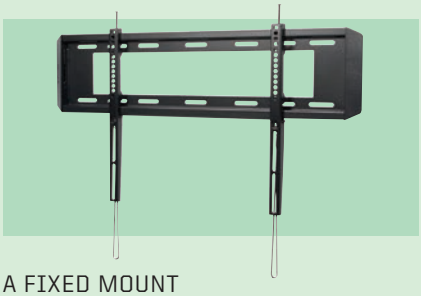
POOR – EXCELLENT | RECOMMENDED | CR BEST BUY | GREEN CHOICE

TECH UPDATE

Where to Mount Your Flat-Screen TV



HANGING YOUR TV on a wall, rather than having it sit on top of a TV stand, has become popular—especially for larger TVs that are 55 inches or more. To hang a TV, there are several types of mounts to choose from, including ones that keep the TV in a fixed position, ones that let you tilt the screen, and ones that offer an even wider range of motion. The type you choose depends on the layout of the room, where you're planning to put the TV, and where you'll sit, say CR's experts. Our guide, below, will help you decide.



A FIXED MOUNT

WE TESTED
Kanto Fixed TV Wall Mount $55, available at Best Buy and Office Depot

WHAT IT IS A fixed mount is usually the least pricey type. Because it sits nearly flush to the wall, it works best with a TV that has cord connections on the side of the set. (If your TV has them on the back, you may need to connect the cable box or console cables before hanging the TV.)

WHERE TO USE ONE It's best when you'll be viewing the TV set straight on. Ideally, the middle of the TV screen should be at a seated viewer's eye level. If you prefer to mount your TV above that level, we advise keeping the bottom edge of the TV at eye level. Some models have adjustable leveling screws to make sure the TV is level after it's mounted.

A TILTING MOUNT

WE TESTED
Sanus Advanced Tilt 4D TV Wall Mount $170, available at Amazon and Best Buy

WHAT IT IS A tilting mount lets you angle the TV downward, and typically also offers a limited swivel from side to side. Tilting models that also swivel tend to stick out a bit farther from the wall than fixed mounts.

WHERE TO USE ONE Because it allows you to angle the screen downward for better viewing, this is the better option if you'll be mounting your TV higher up on the wall—i.e., above the mantel or fireplace. Note, though, that we don't recommend mounting a TV above a working fireplace because heat and smoke can damage a TV. This mount can also be adjusted to reduce glare on your screen if, for example, your TV is near a window that shines light on it.

A FULL-MOTION MOUNT

WE TESTED
Amazon Basics Dual Arm Full Motion Articulating TV Mount $48 (Amazon)

WHAT IT IS This type allows your TV to move in any direction, including forward toward the viewer. In general, it's bulkier and requires the TV to hang farther off the wall. A larger TV may require a mount with two arms instead of one.

WHERE TO USE ONE A full-motion mount is a good choice for a TV in a less convenient viewing spot, such as the corner of a den or bedroom. Offering more range than tilting mounts, it also works well for TVs above a nonworking fireplace. Some of these are even designed to be pulled out and down in front of the mantel. This type of mount can also be a solution in rooms where the TV is far away—like on the wall opposite your bed in a large room. The model above, for example, can extend 16 inches forward.

Regardless of which style you choose, make sure that the mount is compatible with your TV's size and weight. For example, the Sanus above holds up to 150 pounds; the Amazon Basics, only up to 100 pounds. For more guidance, go to ***CR.org/tvmount****.*

PHOTO, TOP: ADOBE STOCK

RECALLS

TO STAY INFORMED ABOUT RECALLS FOR YOUR VEHICLES, READERS WITH MEMBERSHIP CAN USE OUR FREE CAR RECALL TRACKER AT **CR.ORG/MORE**.

CHEVROLET AND GMC SUVs

General Motors is recalling 681,509 Chevrolet Equinox and GMC Terrain SUVs from the 2014 and 2015 model years to address a windshield wiper defect. The automaker found that ball joints in the windshield wiper modules may experience corrosion and wear that could cause one or both front wipers to fail. An inoperative wiper could obstruct visibility and increase the risk of a crash. GM says there is no warning sign of an imminent failure.
What to do: The automaker will send owners a notification letter, but you can also contact Chevrolet customer service at 800-222-1020 and GMC customer service at 800-462-8782. Dealerships will inspect the wiper module that houses the defective ball joint and repair it or replace it with an improved module as necessary. GM will reimburse owners who paid for a similar repair prior to this announcement. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's campaign number for this recall is 22V-165. GM's number for this recall is N212352530.

AIRBORNE GUMMIES

Reckitt is recalling about 3.7 million 63- and 75-count bottles of Airborne Gummies (sold in blueberry pomegranate, orange, and assorted fruit flavors), due to more than 70 reports of caps or seals popping off the bottles, posing an injury risk. The bottles were sold at BJ's Wholesale Club, Costco, CVS, Kroger, Sam's Club, Target, Walgreens, Walmart, and other stores nationwide, and online at Amazon and schiffvitamins.com from May 2020 through February 2022 for between $18 and $33.
What to do: Contact Reckitt at 888-266-8003, or go to schiffvitamins.com for details on a prepaid return label for unopened bottle(s) to receive a full refund. Bottles that have already been opened are not subject to this recall because they would have released any pressure buildup and do not present an injury hazard.

FITBIT IONIC SMARTWATCHES

Fitbit is recalling about 1 million Ionic Smartwatches sold in the U.S., and about 693,000 sold internationally, following 78 reports of burn injuries in the U.S., including two reports of third-degree burns and four reports of second-degree burns due to a faulty lithium-ion battery. The watch model number is FB503 and is listed on the back of the device near the band. This Ionic smartwatch was sold at Best Buy, Kohl's, Target, and other stores nationwide, and online at Amazon and fitbit.com from September 2017 through December 2021 for between $200 and $330.
What to do: Stop using the watch. Contact Fitbit at 888-925-1764, or go to help.fitbit.com/ionic. Upon receipt of the watch, the company will issue a refund of $299. It will also provide participating consumers with a discount code for 40 percent off select Fitbit devices.

LOVEVERY DRINKING CUPS

Lovevery is recalling about 169,000 stainless steel drinking cups included in its Inspector Play Kits (in addition, about 11,000 cups were sold in Canada) for babies 7 to 8 months old. The company received 70 reports of the handle of the cup becoming partially or fully detached, including two incidents where a child had the cup handle in their mouth. The recalled cups were sold online at lovevery.com from July 2018 through July 2021 for about $80.
What to do: Take the cups away from children. Contact Lovevery online at lovevery.com/pages/product-recalls, or call 877-367-3175 about free replacement cups. Lovevery is also contacting all known purchasers directly.

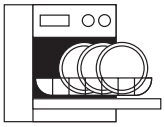
PHYSICIANSCARE PAIN RELIEF TABLETS AND PILLS

Acme United Corporation is recalling about 165,000 PhysiciansCare brand Aspirin, Extra Strength Non Aspirin, Extra Strength Pain Reliever, Ibuprofen, Medication Station, and Multi-Packs packaged in cardboard boxes of 50, 100, 250, and 500 tablets per box, sold online at Amazon and fsastore.com from February 2014 through June 2021 for between $5 and $50. The recalled over-the-counter products contain regulated substances (aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen) and aren't in the type of child-resistant packaging required by the Poison Prevention Packaging Act (PPPA), posing a risk of poisoning if swallowed by young children.
What to do: Keep these products away from children. For more information, call 888-520-2199 or go to recallrtr.com/acmeunitedotc.

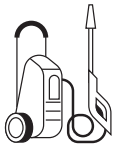
JUNE IS THE BEST TIME TO BUY ...

CORDLESS DRILLS

DISHWASHERS



PRESSURE WASHERS



INSECT REPELLENTS

PRODUCT UPDATE

THE LATEST RATINGS FROM OUR LABS

Get a Great Smartphone for Less

These days, you really can find a model packed with the features you want at a reasonable price.

by Melanie Pinola and Chris Raymond

TERRIFIC BATTERY LIFE
Some midpriced models deliver 40-plus hours per charge. This $400 OnePlus 8T logged 23.5 in our labs, enough to last a full day.

POWERFUL CAMERAS
Modestly priced phones can have premium features like the four cameras (wide- and ultrawide-angle, zoom, and monochrome) on the back of the OnePlus 8T.

BEAUTIFUL DISPLAYS
A few lower-priced models have state-of-the-art OLED screens. Many of the rest feature LCD screens that score well with CR testers.

HIGH-TECH SECURITY
The OnePlus 8T lets you unlock it via fingerprint sensor. Some midpriced models use facial recognition.

DUAL SIM CARDS
With this phone's two cards, you can have two numbers ring on the same device—one for personal calls and one for work.

OnePlus 8T
$400
75 OVERALL SCORE

NOT SO LONG AGO you had to make a painful choice when shopping for a new smartphone: Either shell out big money for a top-of-the-line model or settle for a no-frills budget phone with limited features and battery life.

In recent years, however, Apple, Samsung, and rivals like OnePlus have released an armada of mid-priced models that can compete on many levels with even the most expensive devices—which these days run upward of $1,000. More than half of the 50 phones in our current ratings are priced between $200 and $700, and many receive either a Best Buy or CR-recommended designation from our expert testers.

The truth is, lots of the features that used to distinguish top-of-the-line models—high-definition screens, image stabilization, and that artsy photo mode that blurs the background of portraits, to name a few—are now available on plenty of lower-priced models.

So what are you sacrificing if you decide not to fork over $1,000 or more for your next phone? Your screen probably won't boast a "refresh rate" as high as those on top-tier models, so the text and images will be slightly less crisp as you scroll through your Instagram feed. You may have to do without certain advanced camera features—a high-powered optical zoom lens, for example. And you're not likely to get wireless charging, which lets you power up by setting your phone on a charging "pad" rather than plugging it into an outlet.

For many consumers, those are easy to pass up. But here's the thing: While lower-priced models don't sport all those top-shelf features, they often do have some. If you choose carefully, in other words, you may not have to make any sacrifices when it comes to the features that matter most to you.

3 MORE WAYS TO SPEND LESS AND GET MORE

BUY REFURBISHED
Apple restores and sells used models with new exterior shells, new batteries, and even 1-year warranties. Samsung has similar standards. But not every company refurbishes with the same care. Look for a phone that's certified pre-owned. If that's not an option, make sure that it comes with a new battery and all the standard accessories (earbuds, charging cord, etc.), and that any replacement parts were supplied by the manufacturer.

GO RETRO
When Apple or Samsung release new phones, the earlier models—often outfitted with high-quality cameras and displays, and other cutting-edge capabilities—dip in price. The feature-packed iPhone 12 Mini, for example, now sells for $600, down from $699.

SNARE A CARRIER DEAL
With the right timing—think Dads-and-Grads season, back-to-school time, or Black Friday—you can score a big discount on a new, state-of-the-art phone. To get the bargain, though, you may have to trade in an eligible model (in good working order), upgrade your plan, and/or add a new line.

Below, we look at how today's less pricey phones stack up in key areas and provide tips on how to find a model with the extras you covet most.

Long-Lasting Battery Life

Even the most feature-packed phone will disappoint if it can't get you through a full day of work and play. In recent years, Apple, Samsung, and other manufacturers have stretched the battery life of their models, outfitting even budget phones with large batteries and computer chips designed to boost energy efficiency.

In fact, many of today's lower-priced models deliver a once-inconceivable 40-plus hours of use per charge, according to CR testers. The $1,100 iPhone 13 Pro Max logged a category-best 52.5 hours in our labs, but the $400 Samsung Galaxy A42 5G is next at 49 hours and the $170 OnePlus Nord N100 is third at 48.5. All told, 18 of the 50 models in our current ratings reach or exceed the 40-hour threshold.

Great Displays

Consumers tell CR researchers that they want phones with high-quality displays—and here, again, there's little need to pay top-dollar to get one.

Models like the $600 6.5-inch Samsung Galaxy S20 FE 5G offer the OLED screen technology found in some high-end televisions and the priciest phones from Apple and Samsung. These screens deliver sharper contrast, nearly unlimited viewing angles (so multiple people can comfortably view a photo or YouTube clip at one time), and text and images that are easy to see in all lighting conditions, indoors or out.

And the odds are good you'll be similarly impressed by the traditional LCD screens on many sub-$700 phones. With a quick scan of the chart on page 21, you'll see that 17 of the 26 models listed there have displays rated Very Good or better by our testers.

Instagram-Worthy Cameras

If there's one area where midpriced phones tend to fall short of their premium rivals, it's photography.

Not that less pricey phones deliver obviously substandard images. On the contrary, many produce very impressive selfie shots, rear-camera photos, or rear-camera video—just typically not all three. And the models generally can't do as much gee-whiz photo magic as the flagship Apple and Samsung phones. Those harness multi-camera setups (wide-angle, ultrawide-angle, and zoom) and advanced software to capture sharp images in low-light conditions and crisp action shots from halfway across a soccer field.

So you may have to make some concessions—or pay up—if you're a serious shutterbug. But maybe not: It's actually not hard to find older, less expensive iPhone models with premium camera features. The $600 iPhone 12 Mini and the $500 iPhone 11 have wide- and ultrawide-angle rear cameras like the iPhone 13s. And the iPhone 13 Mini, which sells for $700, has an all-new camera setup designed to produce better low-light shots.

You can also save by zooming in on specific advanced camera functions. For example, the $450 Google Pixel 5a 5G performs admirably well when it comes to still shots and selfies. The $400 OnePlus 8T is particularly adept at taking 1080p video. And the $280 LG Velvet 5G produces snapshots worthy of any Instagram feed. Use the ratings on the facing page to find models that offer the photo features you want.

Choose Your Bonus Feature

The priciest phones on the market do bring some cool tricks to the party, including wireless charging, water resistance, and secure facial recognition tech to unlock them.

If you want all of that, you probably do have to spend more than $1,000. But again, many lower-priced models offer one or two of those perks, so check our ratings chart or online product descriptions if there's a feature you particularly like. The $600 Samsung Galaxy S20 FE 5G, for example, has wireless charging and a memory card slot for expanded storage in addition to a top-rated camera and long-lasting battery life.

That's the sort of savvy shopping that leads to real savings—the kind worth phoning home about.

LOWER-PRICED PHONES WITH PREMIUM FEATURES

Each of these nicely priced models delivers superior performance in at least one of the areas consumers say they care most about.

BATTERY-LIFE CHAMP

Samsung Galaxy A42 5G
$400

70 OVERALL SCORE

In CR lab testing, the battery in this Samsung phone powered along for an awesome 49 hours on a single charge, second only to the 52.5 hours of the $1,000 iPhone 13 Pro Max.

CAMERA CHAMP

iPhone 13 Mini
$700

79 OVERALL SCORE

This model ranks among the top 10 in our smartphone camera ratings, with Very Good front-and-back still image quality and rear video quality. It also has the ultrawide lens and Cinematic Mode found on Apple's $1,000 phones.

DISPLAY CHAMP

Samsung Galaxy A52 5G
$500

74 OVERALL SCORE

The 6.5-inch OLED screen on this model doesn't score quite as high as the one on the OnePlus 8T. But much like the 8T and the $1,000 Galaxy S21+ 5G, it has a high refresh rate (120MHz) for silky-smooth scrolling, streaming, and animation.

Ratings › **Great Call** Before you shell out $1,000 for a new phone, take a look at the options below. All are priced between $200 and $700—and many of them get an enthusiastic thumbs-up from our expert testers.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Test Results						Features			
			Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Camera: Rear image quality	Camera: Rear 1080p video quality	Camera: Selfie image quality	Battery and charging	Display	Performance	Battery life (hr.)	Water resistance test	Display diagonal size (in.)	5G low- and mid-bands
SMARTPHONES $200-$700														
Apple iPhone 13 mini	79	$700	⏫	⏫	↑	↑	↑	–	↑	⏫	32.5	Pass	5.4	●
Apple iPhone 12 mini	77	$600	⏫	⏫	↑	↑	↑	–	↑	↑	28.5	Pass	5.4	●
Samsung Galaxy S20 FE 5G	77	$600	⏫	⏫	↑	–	–	↑	↑	↑	38.0	Pass	6.5	●
OnePlus 9	76	$600	⏫	⏫	↑	–	–	↑	↑	↑	33.0	Pass	6.6	●
Samsung Galaxy S21 FE 5G	76	$700	⏫	⏫	↑	↑	↑	–	↑	↑	29.0	Pass	6.4	●
Apple iPhone SE 2022	75	$430	⏫	⏫	↑	↑	↑	–	↑	↑	30.0	Pass	4.7	●
OnePlus 8T	75	$400	⏫	⏫	–	↑	–	–	⏫	⏫	23.5	NA	6.6	●
Apple iPhone 12	75	$700	⏫	⏫	↑	↑	↑	–	⏫	↑	32.5	Pass	6.1	●
Google Pixel 6	75	$600	↑	⏫	↑	↑	↑	–	↑	↑	34.0	Pass	6.4	●
Samsung Galaxy A52 5G	74	$500	⏫	⏫	–	–	↑	↑	↑	–	45.0	Pass	6.5	●
Google Pixel 5a 5G	73	$450	↑	⏫	↑	–	↑	↑	↑	–	43.5	Pass	6.3	●
Samsung Galaxy A42 5G	70	$400	⏫	⏫	–	–	–	↑	↑	–	49.0	NA	6.6	●
Apple iPhone 11	66	$500	⏫	⏫	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	28.0	Pass	6.1	
OnePlus Nord N200 5G	65	$240	⏫	⏫	–	–	–	↑	↑	–	46.0	NA	6.5	●
Samsung Galaxy A32 5G	65	$280	⏫	⏫	–	–	–	↑	–	↓	44.0	NA	6.5	●
LG Velvet 5G	65	$280	↑	↓	↑	–	–	↑	↑	–	40.0	Pass	6.8	●
Nokia XR20	60	$550	↑	⏬	–	–	–	–	↑	↓	38.5	Pass	6.7	●
Motorola Edge	60	$700	↑	–	↑	↑	–	–	↑	–	34.0	NA	6.7	●
Motorola One 5G Ace	59	$400	↑	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	41.0	NA	6.7	●
Motorola Moto G Stylus (2021)	58	$300	↑	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	30.5	NA	6.8	
Motorola Moto G Stylus	57	$300	↑	–	–	–	↓	–	–	↓	33.0	NA	6.4	
Nokia G50	55	$300	↑	⏬	–	–	–	–	–	–	42.0	NA	6.8	●
Motorola Moto G Power	54	$250	↑	–	–	–	↓	–	–	↓	41.0	NA	6.4	
Motorola Moto G Power (2021)	54	$250	↑	–	–	–	–	–	–	↓	41.5	NA	6.6	
Nokia 5.4	47	$200	↑	⏬	–	↓	↓	–	–	↓	34.5	NA	6.4	
Nokia G20	39	$200	↑	⏬	–	↓	–	–	–	↓	43.0	NA	6.5	

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/smartphones.

HOW WE TEST: Overall Score combines test results with survey data for predicted reliability and owner satisfaction. **Predicted reliability** estimates the likelihood that a brand's model will develop problems within the first two years of ownership. **Owner satisfaction** reflects the proportion of members extremely likely to recommend the phone. **Rear image quality** assesses test images produced by the main camera, including resolution, dynamic range, color accuracy, and visual noise. **Rear 1080p video quality** is based on the judgments of trained panelists who view recorded images shot in varied lighting conditions at the highest quality setting (1080p max). **Selfie image quality** assesses test images produced by the front camera, including bokeh portraits. **Display** is a measure of overall quality, including color, clarity, off-angle viewing, and touch responsiveness. **Performance** reflects results from our processor tests plus the amount of storage compared to the stated storage. **Battery life** reflects battery consumption during a range of tasks (voice, data, display, etc.) under nominal cell-network signals. Results are rounded to the nearest half-hour.

⏬ ↓ – ↑ ⏫ POOR EXCELLENT | ✓ RECOMMENDED $ CR BEST BUY

BOOST YOUR BRAIN POWER AT ANY AGE

Memory-building games, superfoods, supplements. What really works to preserve—and even enhance—your thinking skills.

BY HALLIE LEVINE ILLUSTRATIONS BY JENNIFER TAPIAS DERCH

Keeping our brains and memories sharp is certainly on our minds these days. In fact, 34 percent of Americans say they've noticed signs of forgetfulness significant enough to worry them, in a March Consumer Reports nationally representative survey of 2,116 adults.

It's true that the numbers of those diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, which robs sufferers of cognition, are predicted to keep climbing. And we've yet to find a cure. In fact, aducanumab (Aduhelm), the first new Alzheimer's drug to be approved in almost two decades, may offer little benefit, according to a number of experts.

But evidence is piling up that lifestyle steps may reduce brain disease risks and help us maintain cognitive strength. A major 2020 report in The Lancet suggests that 12 factors within our control–including smoking, poor fitness, and obesity–are responsible for up to 40 percent of dementia cases.

We're also seeing the potential in personalized prevention for those at higher risk for poor brain health. Take one study published in 2019, where researchers tailored risk reduction advice to volunteers' cognitive test results, weight, and levels of blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar.

After 18 months, most of the 174 participants–all with a family history of Alzheimer's–had improved on thinking and memory evaluations. For those who had followed recommendations closely, "results were quite stunning," says study co-author Lisa Mosconi, PhD, director of the Alzheimer's Prevention Clinic at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City. More research is needed, but "our findings make clear that it's never too late to make key lifestyle changes, and see brain benefits," Mosconi says. And because issues like high blood pressure are now known to have negative effects on thinking many years later, it may never be too early to focus on brain health, either. What follows are some strategies to consider.

5 BRAIN HEALTH BASICS

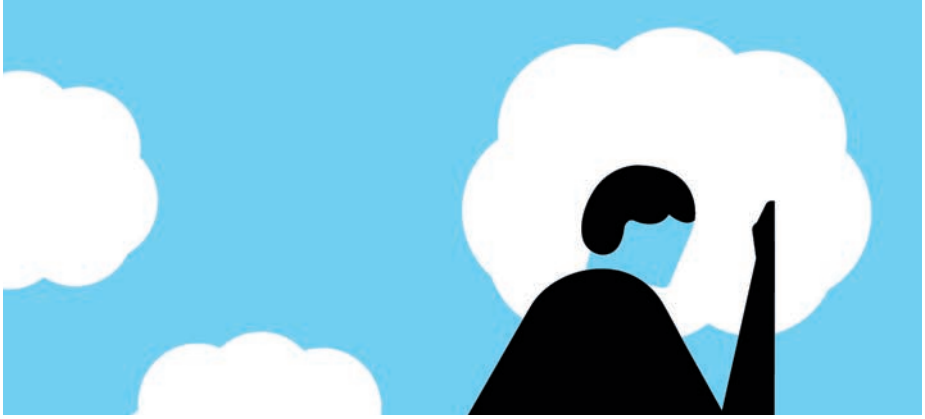
Keeping an eye on your overall health is key for brain health, but it may be especially important to prevent certain medical issues—and address them promptly if they do crop up. A few other regular self-care steps may also help you preserve thinking and memory.

WATCH THESE HEALTH NUMBERS

Monitoring and managing your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels are essential for optimal brain function, research suggests. "We know diseases like hypertension and type 2 diabetes damage the small blood vessels in the brain, affecting parts that you need for thinking and memory," says Gary Small, MD, chair of psychiatry at Hackensack University Medical Center in New Jersey and author of "The Memory Bible" (Hachette Go, 2021). This may be important sooner in life than you'd expect. While we know that uncontrolled hypertension in midlife hikes the risk of dementia in older age, a study published in March in JAMA Network Open found that higher blood pressure in young adulthood was linked to poorer brain health as early as in middle age. Another study published in March found that lower HDL ("good") cholesterol and higher triglycerides in people as young as 35 was associated with dementia decades later—and linked high blood glucose between ages 51 and 60 to a higher risk of future cognitive problems.

GO FOR A HEARING EXAM

If you often have difficulty following a group conversation, have your hearing checked. A number of studies suggest that hearing issues may affect your brain. For instance, an analysis of 36 studies, published in 2018 in JAMA Otolaryngology–Head & Neck Surgery, found that age-related hearing loss was linked to an increased risk of cognitive decline. Even very minor losses may contribute. "Your brain is like a computer that's reliant on input source—if you distort the audio and video quality, it can't compute properly," says Ronald Petersen, MD, director of the Mayo Clinic Alzheimer's Disease Research Center in Rochester, Minn. Sometimes, the fix is as simple as having your doctor remove excess ear wax (don't DIY). But for permanent hearing loss, a hearing aid may be your best bet.

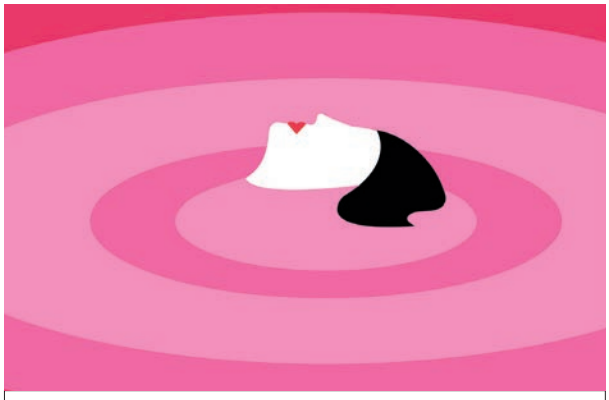


GET GOOD SLEEP

As you slumber, your brain stays surprisingly busy, helping to solidify your memories for long-term storage. In addition, "When you're asleep, your brain goes into housekeeping mode and cleans out toxins that can impair brain health," says James Leverenz, MD, director of the Center for Brain Health at the Cleveland Clinic in Las Vegas. While sleep needs vary from person to person, about 7 hours a night appears to be the sweet spot for the brain, according to a 2020 study published in JAMA Network Open. Getting some of your snooze time during the day is okay, too: A regular afternoon nap of no more than 2 hours was associated with better language use and memory in older adults, in a study published last year in the journal General Psychiatry. But frequently sleeping more than 9 hours a night may signal that you have an underlying condition that can negatively affect brain health, like obstructive sleep apnea, says Small—so check with your doctor if you typically sleep this long.

HAVE YOUR MEDS REVIEWED

Your doctor or pharmacist should go over your regular meds—including over-the-counter products and supplements—at least once a year, says Soo Borson, MD, professor emerita of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of Washington School of Medicine. They can see whether any may temporarily impair memory or thinking, such as prescription and OTC sleep drugs, older antihistamines, and anti-anxiety meds and narcotics. Note: Certain anticholinergics, like some older antidepressants and overactive bladder meds, are linked to a higher dementia risk, even 20 years after use.



FEELING ANXIOUS?

Both depression and chronic anxiety may make people more vulnerable to dementia as they age, so you may want to reach out to a therapist if you're experiencing either. "If you're depressed or anxious, you're more likely to experience an increase in stress hormone levels, which are very toxic to brain cells," says Petersen. "We also know that depression and anxiety have been linked to a shrinkage of the hippocampus, a part of the brain involved in memory." Plus, mood issues can reduce your desire to see friends and family, and isolation itself can raise your risk of dementia. (For more on how social activities can help shore up your cognitive reserves, see "Keep Your Brain Engaged," on page 28.)

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

4 THINGS THAT ARE HARD ON YOUR BRAIN

SMOKING. Tobacco use can hurt your brain. One review of 37 studies found that compared with never-smokers, current smokers are 34 percent more likely to develop dementia in later life for every 20 daily cigarettes. Quitting can lower risks significantly, especially if you kick the habit by middle age.

JUNK FOOD. Limit highly processed foods and those high in saturated fat, like red meat and full-fat dairy. "They increase inflammation everywhere in your body, including your brain, which raises your risk of dementia," says Gary Small, MD.

TOO MUCH ALCOHOL. Heavy drinking can kill brain neurons and accelerate memory loss, says Small. Research bears this out. More than 14 weekly drinks was linked to brain damage and a higher dementia risk, in a 2020 review published in the journal Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment. Small advises no more than two drinks a day for men and no more than one for women.

AIR POLLUTION. "We think pollution is toxic to nerve cells," says neurologist Joel Salinas, MD, who specializes in Alzheimer's disease at NYU Langone in New York City. In his research on elderly women, those exposed to the most fine-particle pollution—think car emissions—had the largest amount of brain shrinkage. Earlier research suggests that middle-aged and older people living in London's most polluted sections have a greater likelihood of dementia. Consider restricting outdoor activities if the air quality index is over 100 (check at airnow.gov), avoid high-traffic areas while exercising, and at home, ban smoking, limit fireplace use, and keep rooms well-ventilated.

EAT FOR BRAIN STRENGTH

Consuming a mix of nutrient-packed foods—not focusing on a single "superfood"—and maintaining a normal weight are two pillars of cognitive well-being. And embracing the former can help with the latter.

CHOOSE FLAVONOIDS

People who got as little as a daily half-serving of flavonoid-rich foods like apples, berries, and pears were 20 percent less likely to report thinking declines than those who rarely ate them, in a long-term study. Flavonoids may curb inflammation and cell damage, and aid artery blood flow, says co-author Walter Willett, MD, professor of epidemiology and nutrition at Boston's Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

BE CAREFUL WITH SUPPLEMENTS

A host of dietary supplements are sold as brain-boosters. But they have no benefit for most people, says a report by AARP's Global Council on Brain Health. And 2020 research found that some may contain unapproved drugs. Still, omega-3 fatty acid supplements may be worthwhile for those with a family history of dementia, says Mosconi. Vitamin B12, vitamin D, and folate deficiencies have also been linked to cognitive issues, so consider having your levels tested. Talk with your doctor before using supplements.

SERVE UP A SALAD

Eating just 1 cup of lettuce daily, or ½ cup of cooked dark leafy greens, may delay age-related cognitive declines, say researchers at Rush University Medical School in Chicago. In their study, the brains of daily leafy greens eaters functioned as well as those of people 11 years younger.

CONSIDER THE BIG 3

Meals that are ½ produce, ¼ lean protein, and ¼ whole grains, with a bit of fat, will generally keep you on a healthy track. But three plant-based eating plans—the DASH, Mediterranean-style, and MIND diets—which are rich in produce, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and healthy fats found in foods such as avocado, fatty fish, and olive oil, are a boon for the brain, says Weill Cornell's Lisa Mosconi, PhD. Research supports all three, but a 2019 review published in Advances in Nutrition found that the MIND eating style—which puts more emphasis on berries and leafy greens—seems to have the most robust brain benefits.

MORE THAN FORGETFULNESS?

It's normal to occasionally misplace your eyeglasses or forget where you parked at a mall, especially if you're multi-tasking, sleep deprived, or stressed, says James Leverenz, MD. With age, you may also notice that it takes longer to retrieve some information—such as people's names—but that with a bit of time or a hint or two, you remember. But see a doctor if you (or others) notice that you have a regular pattern of one or more of the following:

- *Asking the same question repeatedly, especially with behavior changes.*
- *Mixing up words, saying "radio" instead of "TV," for instance.*
- *Placing items in inappropriate places, like car keys in the fridge. Eleven percent of Americans reported doing this in CR's survey.*
- *Getting lost while driving to places you know well.*

LOAD UP ON BERRIES

These tiny fruits are powerhouses for both learning and memory, says Barbara Shukitt-Hale, PhD, a neuroscientist at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University in Boston. In her own research, older people who consumed the equivalent of 1 cup of fresh blueberries each day for three months performed better on cognitive tests than those who were given a placebo. And a 20-year study of women ages 70 and older suggests that eating blueberries at least once each week or strawberries at least twice a week may delay brain aging up to 2.5 years.

INDULGE THAT COFFEE CRAVING

People who drank 2 to 3 cups of coffee plus the same amount of tea daily had about a 30 percent lower risk of dementia and stroke compared with those who sipped neither drink, in a study published in PLOS Medicine in 2021. This may be thanks to the drinks' plentiful antioxidants and flavonoids, says Small. Note: U.S. guidelines recommend no more than 400 milligrams of caffeine daily—approximately 3 to 5 cups of coffee.

DINE ON SEAFOOD OFTEN

You've probably heard fish has brain benefits, and plenty of research backs this up. For instance, a study published last November in the journal Neurology found that healthy people over age 65 who eat two or more weekly servings of fatty fish like salmon, tuna, and sardines may have a lower risk of developing vascular brain disease, which can cause dementia. Dining on fin food four or more times weekly offers the most benefit. "Fatty fish is rich in omega-3s, which help quell brain inflammation," says Willett. "It may also be that fish is a healthy substitution for foods high in saturated fat, like red meat, which can be harmful for brain health."

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

▪ *Experiencing mood changes for no apparent reason.* Your doctor will first check for reversible causes like depression or a drug side effect. They can also determine whether you should be evaluated by a neurologist, a brain disease specialist. And if you're told you have mild cognitive impairment—marked by subtle thinking and memory change—remember that lifestyle steps like exercise and a healthy diet may help keep it from worsening.

THE EXERCISE RX

We've long known that what's good for your heart is good for your brain—especially physical activity. "Regular aerobic exercise boosts blood flow to your brain and also increases the size of your hippocampus, the part of your brain that's involved in verbal memory and learning," says Zaldy Tan, MD, MPH, medical director of the Jona Goldrich Center for Alzheimer's and Memory Disorders at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. Try these steps to reap the rewards.

GET ENOUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

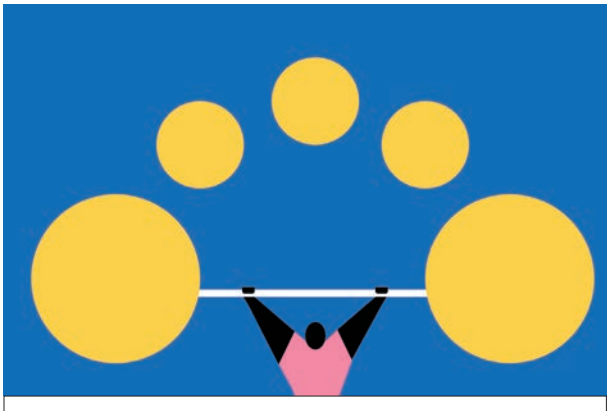
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all adults get 150 weekly minutes of moderately intense exercise, such as brisk walking. That could mean exercising for about 30 minutes five times a week. Tan, meanwhile, recommends about 30 minutes each day. But if you can go longer, do. Research suggests that exercise sessions of 45 to 60 minutes offer the biggest brain benefits. Been inactive? Sedentary people older than age 55 showed improvements in thinking after just six months of walking three times a week, in a study published in 2019 in the journal Neurology.

GIVE YOGA OR TAI CHI A TRY

Yoga's benefits are two-fold: It's effective for easing stress (which can muddy your thinking) and practicing unfamiliar moves helps your brain to create new neural pathways, says Cathy Ciolek, PT, president of the Academy of Geriatric Physical Therapy. Tai chi, with its slow, gentle movements, "forces your body to work on both strength and balance, and you have to learn and remember various poses," says Leverenz. Research suggests that tai chi may also improve your ability to multitask.

TAKE A DANCE LESSON (OR TWO)

Older adults who danced several times a week showed less loss of the brain's white matter than those who did activities that weren't as cognitively challenging, socially engaging, or vigorous, in a study in Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience. If dance isn't for you, try another activity where you can learn or socialize, like water aerobics.



PUMP SOME IRON

Six months of resistance training may help prevent the brain's hippocampus from shrinking with age, says a 2020 University of Sydney study. "When you lift weights, you're really focused on form and performing specific moves, which in turn exercises the neural circuits in your brain," says Small. "It also improves balance, which reduces your risk of a bad fall that could potentially cause a head injury"—a threat to cognitive health. Small recommends two weekly resistance training sessions of 30 to 45 minutes. You don't have to bench-press the big weights, though. Using your own body weight, hand weights, or exercise bands will do the trick. Start light and increase reps and weight gradually. Find four moves at **CR.org/strengthtrain.**

KEEP YOUR BRAIN ENGAGED

Will one of those brain-training programs sharpen your thinking skills? Research suggests they're only minimally useful, says Mosconi. "Just because you've learned to play a brain game doesn't mean you'll see an improvement in memory, attention, and focus in other areas." Instead, check out these science-backed ways to challenge your brain.

MAKE LEARNING A LIFELONG PURSUIT

Education early in life appears to help preserve brain health many years down the road. But trying new activities and building new skills throughout life may also help to reduce the risk of cognitive decline, says Heather Snyder, PhD, vice president of medical and scientific relations at the Alzheimer's Association. Anything that stimulates your brain counts, Snyder says, from learning to paint to a college lecture to a new exercise class—especially if it brings the chance for some social engagement.

RETIRE A LITTLE LATER

Working until age 67 or later may offer a buffer against age-related cognitive problems, suggests a study published in 2021 in the journal SSM Population Health. When researchers tracked the work histories of 20,469 people, they found that those who retired sooner experienced earlier declines in memory and thinking than those who stayed on the job. Volunteering probably has similar benefits, perhaps by keeping people cognitively, socially, and physically active, and instilling a sense of purpose.

FOCUS ON SIMPLE ACTS

Learning to speak French or taking courses in an area that's new to you may both be good for the brain. But the truth is, so are everyday activities like letter writing, reading, playing board games, and doing puzzles, according to research published in the journal Neurology last year. Even mowing the lawn or doing laundry helps you hang on to brain cells: In another study published in 2021, adults who spent more time on household chores had a larger hippocampus and frontal lobe than those who didn't.

HANG OUT WITH FRIENDS

Socializing looks to have brain-positive effects. One example: People who were more socially active had more healthy brain tissue than those who were less likely to spend time with others, in a study published in 2020. But a large friend group isn't essential. "The key is the quality and frequency of social support they provide, so if you just have a handful of close friends who are good listeners and supportive, that may be enough," says neurologist Joel Salinas, MD. The goal is warding off loneliness, because it "might increase levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which can have a negative impact on the brain," he says.

MIX THINGS UP

Regularly engaging in a wide variety of activities may give your brain more protection than any single pastime does, a study published in 2021 in the journal Aging suggests.

PRACTICE RELAXATION

Mindfulness activities like meditation may help curb brain issues—even in those who already have cognitive problems. In a study published in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease in 2018, people with memory challenges who did a daily 12-minute meditation reported clearer thinking after three months. Meditating "reduces stress and inflammation, which are both toxic to the brain," says Ronald Petersen, MD. It may also enhance connections between brain nerve cells, another plus for cognition. Meditation workshops are often offered at community centers and medical centers, or via videos, apps like Headspace, or websites like UCLA's MARC (uclahealth.org/marc). But you can also simply spend a few minutes a day breathing in and out slowly and deeply, or do an activity that relaxes you, like taking in the greenery and sunshine at a nearby park.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

BEATING BRAIN FOG

We've been hearing a lot lately about "brain fog," which can manifest in fuzzy thinking and poor focus. While brain fog can be caused by anything from a sluggish thyroid to a vitamin B12 shortfall, it may also occur with and after recovery from COVID-19. In one study published in the journal JAMA Network Open, of 740 people who'd recovered from COVID-19 an average of 7.6 months earlier, a quarter of the study volunteers reported that they had experienced memory issues, while another 18 percent said they had trouble processing information. In addition, 16 percent struggled with executive function, which is related to skills like organization and self-control. Do you suspect your cognitive fogginess is related to coronavirus? Ask your doctor about an appointment for a neuropsychological evaluation at a post-COVID-19 recovery clinic. You may be an appropriate candidate for cognitive rehabilitation therapy, which works to improve your memory, attention processing, and problem-solving. If your fogginess is unlikely to be a result of COVID-19, your doctor can run blood tests to determine whether you have an issue that may respond to medication, or in the case of a vitamin deficiency, possibly a supplement, says Petersen.

The MEAT LOVERS' GUIDE to Plant-Based Meat

CR analyzed 32 faux burgers, nuggets, fillets, and sausages for taste and nutrition, and talked with experts about whether they're better for the environment. Here's what you need to know.

by BRIAN VINES
photography by GREGORY REID

← Beyond Meat Beyond Burger Plant-Based Patties

Impossible Foods Chicken Nuggets ↓

↑
MorningStar Farms
Veggie Chik'n Strips

↑
Gardein
Plant-Based
F'sh Filets

MorningStar
Farms Incogmeato
100% Plant
Protein Breakfast
Sausage Links
→

ONE MILLION YEARS AGO, humans first harnessed the power of fire. If our predecessors were anything like Americans of today, they probably celebrated with a barbecue. We eat more meat and poultry than anyone else in the world—about 225 pounds per person in 2021. Our love for the stuff is so deep that we're now harnessing the power of science to turn plants into meat. Call it fake meat, veggie meat, or meat analog, but more consumers are turning to meat 2.0. We're not talking about your granddad's black bean burgers here. These aim to look like, taste like, and have the texture of meat.

More Americans are trying to eat more plants or less meat—53 percent, according to an August 2021 Consumer Reports nationally representative survey of 2,165 adults. But not everyone is ready to trade sirloin for tofu. Guilt-free for vegetarians and animal lovers, yet meaty enough for carnivores, the current crop of plant-based meat may make cutting back on animal protein easier to swallow.

And we're beyond Beyond Burgers—there's now even plant-based "fish." Colonel Sanders recently served up chick'n nuggets, and Delta Air Lines added "lamb" meatballs to its menu. Evidently, the trend is cleared for takeoff.

Consumers and nutritionists alike have been exploring the taste, plus the nutritional and environmental merits, of these products since Beyond Meat hit the scene in 2015. Seven years and an Impossible Whopper later, can the new meat substitutes really fit into a healthy and sustainable diet?

To find out, CR looked at 32 plant-based burgers, fillets, nuggets, and sausages, comparing them on taste and nutrition. We also dug into the research and talked with nutritionists and environmental scientists to answer common questions about these brave new foods.

What's in Plant-Based Meat?

For some consumers, what's not in it—namely, animals—is reason enough to give it a try. Others, however, are put off by what is in it—namely, a long list of unfamiliar ingredients. In fact, 19 percent of people in a 2020 nationwide survey by Mattson, a food research firm, cited "too many ingredients I can't pronounce" as a reason to take a pass.

Creating meat from plants takes some doing. Most start with a protein, often pea or soy, to provide structure. These aren't the whole foods, but concentrates and isolates extracted in a lab. Oil is added to make the food juicy and tender. Binding agents, such as methylcellulose, starch, and gums, give texture.

Some manufacturers fortify the products with nutrients, such as vitamin B12, so they're closer to meat. One of the fish replacers—from Gardein—had added omega-3s, the heart-healthy fats in fish. The products also contain meaty flavorings and colorings, though the details are often proprietary.

Which Taste Most Like Meat?

None were identical—but some came close, and our panel of sensory experts judged at least one in each category to be very good. "It was the overall flavor profile that gave the impression of meat," says Amy Keating, RD, a CR nutritionist who oversaw our testing.

Among the burgers, Impossible and Beyond's were the most meatlike. Impossible's Chicken Nuggets came "closest to tasting like a typical chicken nugget," and MorningStar Farm's Veggie Chik'n Strips shredded "like chicken breast," Keating says. Three pork pretenders—Beyond Meat's breakfast and sweet Italian sausages and MorningStar's breakfast links—were reminiscent of the real thing. Gardein's fish-and-chip-style fillets and Good Catch's patties were at least somewhat fishlike.

Of course, food doesn't have to taste like meat to taste good. And CR's testers rated several without a meaty taste highly, including Boca's All American Veggie Burgers and Quorn's Meatless Nuggets.

Do They Cost Less Than Real Meat?

No, at least not now. In early April 2022, a pound of ground beef in the U.S. averaged $3.99 per pound; boneless chicken breast, $4.14. The least expensive plant-based meat in our tests was a Tofurky sausage at $5.71 per pound. The priciest: Daring's chicken, at $16 per pound.

The differential may diminish in coming years if meat prices continue to rise and plant-based meat production becomes more efficient and competitive. For example, Amazon Fresh just launched a "budget friendly" line of plant-based meat including Chick'n Nuggets for about $6.30 a pound and plant burger patties for $6.40.

Are Plant-Based Meats Healthier?

That's the main reason people say they're interested in plant-based meats, CR's survey found. But it's not clear that they always are healthier.

Many products in CR's test had fewer calories and less artery-clogging saturated fat. The sausages, for example, had less per serving than the 6 grams in a serving

FOOD STYLING: JAMIE KIMM

MOCK vs. MEAT

Here's how plant-based meats compare nutritionally per serving with the real thing.

Chicken Nuggets (5 Nuggets)

MOCK ↓		MEAT ↓
240	CALORIES	270
1.5	SATURATED FAT (g)	4
13	PROTEIN (g)	14
19	CARBOHYDRATES (g)	15
2	FIBER (g)	0
480	SODIUM (mg)	470

Impossible Foods Chicken Nuggets vs. Tyson Fully Cooked Chicken Nuggets

Sausage (2 Links)

MOCK ↓		MEAT ↓
100	CALORIES	180
1	SATURATED FAT (g)	6
6	PROTEIN (g)	5.3
5	CARBOHYDRATES (g)	0.7
3	FIBER (g)	0
250	SODIUM (mg)	326

MorningStar Farms Incogmeato 100% Plant Protein Breakfast Sausage Links vs. Jimmy Dean Fully Cooked Original Pork Sausage Links

Breaded Fish (2 Pieces)

MOCK ↓		MEAT ↓
200	CALORIES	230
1	SATURATED FAT (g)	1
9	PROTEIN (g)	10
12	CARBOHYDRATES (g)	23
2	FIBER (g)	1
360	SODIUM (mg)	510

Gardein Plant-Based F'sh Filets vs. Gorton's Crispy Battered Fish Fillets

Beef Burger (4 Ounces)

MOCK ↓		MEAT ↓
230	CALORIES	283
5	SATURATED FAT (g)	6.5
20	PROTEIN (g)	29
7	CARBOHYDRATES (g)	0
2	FIBER (g)	0
390	SODIUM (mg)	81

Beyond Meat Beyond Burger Plant-Based Patties vs. 85% lean ground beef patty, broiled

Chicken Strips (3 Ounces)

MOCK ↓		MEAT ↓
140	CALORIES	162
0	SATURATED FAT (g)	1.7
24	PROTEIN (g)	24.5
5	CARBOHYDRATES (g)	0
<1	FIBER (g)	0
370	SODIUM (mg)	73

MorningStar Farms Veggie Chik'n Strips vs. Roasted chicken

of Jimmy Dean Fully Cooked sausage. But that wasn't true across the board.

While eight of the burgers had less saturated fat than what's in 85 percent lean ground beef, two—Gardein's and Impossible's—had more. "Some of these mock burgers have highly saturated coconut or palm oil," Keating says. "That's because they melt slowly, giving a similar mouthfeel to animal fats."

Most of the products CR looked at—unlike real meat—had lots of sodium, which can raise blood pressure. In general, the plant-based sausages, breaded chicken nuggets, and fish fillets had amounts similar to those in their counterparts from the farm and sea. But nuggets from Raised & Rooted had more sodium than Tyson's real ones.

No surprise: Plant-based proteins have more fiber (meat doesn't have any). Most don't have a lot—less than 3 grams per serving—though MorningStar's Incogmeato patties have 8 grams. That's almost a third of the daily value, and comparable to what you'd get from a serving of whole plant proteins, such as beans.

What About Those Added Ingredients?

That is a worry. Lots of evidence supports plant-based diets, but most comes from research involving whole foods, says Basheerah Enahora, RD, who has a plant-forward nutrition counseling practice in Charlotte, N.C. That means lots of fruits, vegetables, beans, and grains, and modest amounts of poultry, fish, and low-fat red meat.

These mock meats are plant-based—but they're not whole foods. And that raises concerns among nutrition pros because growing research links ultraprocessed foods to increased risks of heart disease, weight gain, and more.

It's not clear if processed "meats" pose the same risks, says Stephan van Vliet, PhD, of the Center for Human Nutrition Studies at Utah State University in Logan. "Not all ultraprocessed foods are bad," he says, citing soy and almond milks as healthy examples.

Still, van Vliet, the lead author of a study comparing grass-fed and plant-based burgers, sees important differences between the two. Notably, whole foods contain thousands of compounds in addition to those listed on nutrition labels. "Foods are more complex than the sum of their parts," he says. "It's challenging to put together a replacement that contains them all."

It can be a struggle to include even some familiar nutrients. One study found that swapping animal products with plant-based meat and dairy makes it harder to get enough calcium, potassium, magnesium, zinc, and—especially—vitamin B12, which is found naturally only in animal foods. Among products CR looked at, only five—two "chickens" and three "burgers"—had that vitamin added.

Trying to recreate the benefits of whole foods can raise other issues. Impossible's burgers, for example, have soy leghemoglobin, a compound created from soybean roots that's chemically similar to the heme iron in meat. Impossible Foods founder Pat Brown says it "produces the explosion of flavor and aroma when you throw a burger on a grill." But some research links the heme

MEATY Meatless Meals

MEAT SUBSTITUTES can help you ease into a plant-based diet, but there are other "meaty" vegetarian options, too. Try these easy recipes, some with mock meats and some with ingredients that have a meaty texture and a deep, savory flavor called umami. "What you eat alongside plant-based meats can offset some of their nutritional downsides," says CR nutritionist Amy Keating. "Surround them with healthy ingredients, not a side of fries, and alternate them with other meatless dishes."

—Stephanie Clarke

Veggie 'Sausage' Pizza

Slice 1 mock pork sausage link into rounds. Brown in 1 tsp. olive oil. Spread 12-inch prebaked whole-wheat pizza crust with ⅔ cup marinara. Top with 14-oz. can artichoke hearts (drained and chopped), sausage, 1 cup shredded mozzarella, and ¼ cup chopped basil. Bake at 375° F until cheese melts and is golden, about 10 minutes.

Note: Each recipe makes two servings, except the pizza, which makes four.

in beef to colon cancer. "So in theory an Impossible Burger may pose a similar problem," says Michael Hansen, PhD, a senior scientist at CR.

Which Have the Most Protein?

The makers of plant-based meats play up protein: Twenty-seven of the 32 products CR tested come with a protein claim. In some cases, the amounts are fairly close to what's in the real thing. For example, a MorningStar Farms Meat Lovers burger has 27 grams and No Evil Foods "chicken" strips have 25 grams.

While protein is essential, the average American gets plenty. Much of it does come from meat, which raises concerns, says Dana Hunnes, PhD, a dietitian at the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles. She says meat protein is inflammatory, which could make tumors grow faster and pose other health issues. That suggests that getting more protein from plants could be a good thing. Some of that could come from faux meats—or from beans, lentils, tofu, nuts, and nut butters. "There's some protein in many foods, and small amounts add up," Keating says.

Are They Really Better for the Environment?

That is the second-most-common reason people give for trying plant-based meats, CR's survey found. And meat clearly contributes to climate change: The way we grow, transport, and consume food accounts for about a third of the planet-heating gases created by humans, with animal-based foods causing twice as much as plant-based ones, according to a 2021 study in the journal Nature Food.

Beef alone accounts for roughly half the emissions linked to U.S. diets but provides just 3 percent of the calories. It also takes about 110 gallons of water to produce a pound of rice, compared with 1,840 gallons for a pound of beef.

So moving toward plant-based proteins can be a powerful way to address climate change. And a 2020 analysis led by researchers at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore found that plant-based meats could help, with a carbon footprint about 90 percent smaller than beef's and 40 percent less than poultry's. On the other hand, they're 1.6 to seven times more energy-intensive than tofu, peas, or other less processed plant proteins. And beef raised with sustainable farming practices, such as pasturing fewer cattle on grass and tilling waste into soil, may produce fewer greenhouse gases, too.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Nutritionist Enahora sees these foods as a mixed bag but thinks that if they help you move toward a plant-based diet, that's good. "Starting with plant meat might make sense if you're not relying on it every day and you're including whole foods," she says. Shanika Whitehurst, associate director of product sustainability, research, and testing at CR, agrees, especially on the issue of climate change. "Even being heavily processed," she says, "plant meat has less of an environmental impact than industrial animal production."

Thai-Style 'Chicken'

Sauté ⅔ cup chopped onion and 1 Tbsp. fresh ginger in 1 Tbsp. olive oil, about 4 minutes. Add 2 tsp. chopped garlic; cook 1 minute. Add 5 oz. chopped mock chicken; sauté about 3 minutes. Stir in 2 tsp. soy sauce, 2 tsp. fish sauce, 1 tsp. brown sugar, and 1 Tbsp. lime juice. Remove from heat, and stir in 2 Tbsp. each scallions and cashews, and 1 Tbsp. cilantro. Divide mixture among 6 lettuce leaves.

'Chicken' Bowl & Orange Dressing

In a large bowl, top 1 cup cooked brown rice with ¼ cup shredded carrots, ½ cup each napa and red cabbage, ¼ cup mandarin oranges, and 2 Tbsp. toasted almonds. Whisk 2 Tbsp. orange juice, 1 tsp. lime juice, 1 Tbsp. olive oil, 1 tsp. sesame oil, and 2 tsp. soy sauce. Heat 5 breaded mock chicken nuggets or two breaded tenders per package directions; slice into strips and add to bowl. Toss with dressing and divide into 2 bowls.

Crispy 'Fish' Tacos

Heat 4 breaded mock fish fillets per package directions, then slice. Whisk 2 Tbsp. mayonnaise, 1 Tbsp. lime juice, ½ tsp. honey, and 2 Tbsp. cilantro. Toss 1½ cups tricolor cabbage/slaw mix with dressing. Heat six 6-inch corn tortillas until warm. Divide "fish" pieces among tortillas. Top each with slaw and ¼ avocado, cubed.

Miso Portobello Burger

Make paste of 2 Tbsp. white miso, 2 Tbsp. water, ½ Tbsp. sriracha, 1 tsp. sesame oil, and 1 tsp. fresh ginger. Spread on top and bottom of 2 cleaned portobello caps. Chill 30 minutes. Sauté ½ cup sliced onion in 2 tsp. olive oil 15 minutes. Cook portobellos in a skillet 2 minutes per side. Toast 2 whole-wheat buns. Put portobello cap, half the onions, ¼ cup baby spinach, and ¼ cup sliced bell pepper on bottom halves. Mix 1 Tbsp. mayo, 1 tsp. sriracha, and ½ tsp. honey; spread on top half of buns.

Sun-Dried Tomato and Spinach Pasta

Cook 6 oz. whole-wheat spaghetti; reserve ½ cup water. Sauté ⅓ cup chopped sun-dried tomatoes, 1 tsp. chopped garlic, and pinch red pepper about 1 minute. Add 1 Tbsp. white wine; cook 1 minute. Add 5 cups baby spinach; stir until wilted. Add pasta and ¼ cup pasta water; toss. Remove from heat, and add ¼ cup toasted pine nuts and ¼ cup grated Parmesan. Toss with 1 tsp. lemon juice and chopped parsley.

Ratings > **Mock Meats** Products are grouped by the type of meat they mimic and ranked first by nutrition, then by taste. Those with the same score are listed in alphabetical order.

Product	Test Results		Pricing	Nutrition Information							Flavor + Texture Description
	Nutrition score	Sensory score	Price per package/ package size (price per serving)	Serving size*	Calories	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sodium (mg)	
'BEEF' BURGERS											
Beyond Meat Beyond Burger Plant-Based Patties	I	^^	**$6.00/8 oz.** ($3.00)	1 patty	230	5.0	20	7	2	390	Thick and juicy, with browned exterior. Taste and texture close to a burger's. Moderately salty.
Boca All American Veggie Burgers	I	^^	**$4.20/10 oz.** ($1.05)	1 patty	110	1.5	14	7	4	390	Thin, moist, and slightly chewy; crisp exterior. Good blend of onion and other savory flavors. Kind of salty.
Impossible Foods Burger Patties	I	^^	**$7.00/8 oz.** ($3.50)	1 patty	240	8.0	19	9	3	370	Looks like a medium-rare burger and tastes close to one, too. Savory flavors and moderately salty.
365 Whole Foods Market Meatless Plant-Based Burgers Traditional	I	I	**$4.20/10 oz.** ($1.05)	1 patty	80	0	10	7	2	320	Moist and slightly chewy but not at all similar to a beef burger. Mild onion and garlic flavors.
Dr. Praeger's Perfect Burger	I	I	**$4.00/8 oz.** ($2.00)	1 patty	230	2.0	20	8	4	380	Crisp outside; slightly chewy and moist, pink interior. Looks like beef but has a smoky flavor that leaves a slightly bitter aftertaste.
Good & Gather (Target) Plant-Based Meatless Beef-Style Patties	I	I	**$4.30/12 oz.** ($1.08)	1 patty	150	0.5	16	8	3	370	Slightly chewy, with a crisp exterior; on the dry side. Has some burgerlike browned, smoky notes.
MorningStar Farms Incogmeato 100% Plant Protein Burger Patties	I	I	**$6.00/8.5 oz.** ($3.00)	1 patty	250	5.0	21	12	8	370	Slightly dry and chewy, with faux gristle bits. Appearance is more like beef than its taste, with some salt, spices, and smoky flavors.
MorningStar Farms Vegan Meat Lovers Burgers	vv	I	**$6.40/8 oz.** ($3.20)	1 patty	280	2.5	27	8	4	580	Almost charred exterior. Stringy texture. Flavorful, with some salt, slightly spicy heat, and big browned flavor.
Gardein Ultimate Plant-Based Burger	vv	vv	**$4.00/8 oz.** ($2.00)	1 patty	210	9.0	20	7	1	450	Very spongy. Looks like a burger but doesn't taste like one. Some salt, browned, onion, and garlic flavors.
Trader Joe's Protein Patties Plant Based Burgers	vv	vv	**$4.10/8 oz.** ($2.05)	1 patty	290	3.0	18	11	5	450	Has a rare, almost raw "meat" appearance and texture. Bland, with smoky to ashy flavors.
'CHICKEN' NUGGETS											
Impossible Foods Chicken Nuggets	I	^^	**$8.40/13.5 oz.** ($2.10)	5 nuggets	240	1.5	13	19	2	480	Came closest to tasting like a typical chicken nugget. Moist, flavorful. Moderately salty, with a black pepper kick.
Quorn Meatless Nuggets	I	^^	**$4.85/10.6 oz.** ($1.62)	4 nuggets	216	0.5	10	33	3	470	Thick, crispy breading; chickenlike texture. Flavorful overall, with moderate browned, salt, and black pepper flavors.
365 Whole Foods Market Chicken-Style Plant-Based Nuggets	I	I	**$4.20/10.5 oz.** ($1.20)	4 nuggets	140	0.5	12	13	2	420	Lightly browned, slightly crisp breaded nugget with slightly chickeny flavor. Mildly seasoned, with soft interior and oily mouthfeel.
Beyond Meat Beyond Chicken Plant-Based Breaded Tenders	I	I	**$5.00/8 oz.** ($1.67)	2 tenders	210	2.0	11	15	3	450	Thick tenders with a slightly crisp exterior. Good chickeny flavor, but rubbery texture. On the salty side, with spicy heat.
Jack & Annie's Crispy Jack Nuggets	I	I	**$6.00/10.1 oz.** ($1.71)	4 nuggets	190	1.5	6	19	5	400	Slightly soggy and mushy, with a grayish interior. Has moderate chickeny flavor, with garlic and spicy heat.
Simulate Nuggs Plant-Based Nuggets	I	I	**$6.00/10.4 oz.** ($1.71)	5 nuggets	200	1.5	13	16	2	400	Browned, crunchy breading flavor dominates. Mild flavor isn't very meatlike, and interior is on the dry side.
Raised & Rooted Plant Based Nuggets	vv	I	**$5.00/8 oz.** ($2.00)	4 nuggets	200	1.5	8	18	4	560	Slightly crispy outside with a slightly spongey interior. Mildly seasoned, with chicken-broth-like and black pepper flavors.

WORSE BETTER

Product	Test Results		Pricing	Nutrition Information							Flavor + Texture Description
	Nutrition score	Sensory score	Price per package/ package size (price per serving)	Serving size*	Calories	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sodium (mg)	
'CHICKEN' PIECES											
MorningStar Farms Veggie Chik'n Strips	●	▲	**$6.40/10 oz.** ($1.83)	13 strips	140	0	24	5	<1	370	Looks and shreds like chicken breast. A little heavy on the poultry seasoning but flavorful overall.
Alpha Foods Plant-Based Grilled Chik'n Strips	●	●	**$5.20/8 oz.** ($1.30)	1/2 cup	80	0	10	4	0	310	There's no mistaking it for real chicken, but it has a nice charred, savory flavor and a slightly chewy texture.
Daring Original Plant Chicken Pieces	●	●	**$8.00/8 oz.** ($2.67)	2.5 oz.	90	0	14	1	4	360	Crispy browned pieces that are moderately salty and flavorful. Chewy and somewhat tough.
Gardein Plant-Based Chick'n Strips	●	●	**$4.40/10 oz.** ($1.38)	1/3 pkg.	130	0.5	15	4	0	370	Slightly spongy strips with browned flavor. Mildly seasoned.
Sweet Earth Mindful Chik'n Strips	●	●	**$7.70/8 oz.** ($3.08)	3/4 cup	130	0	18	6	5	330	Tan chunks that are soft and slightly chewy. Tastes mostly of soy, with mild seasonings.
No Evil Foods No Chicken Comrade Cluck Shredded Plant-Based Strips	●	▼	**$5.30/10 oz.** ($1.33)	2.5 oz.	150	0	25	8	3	330	Dark chewy, rubbery chunks that are on the dry side. Slight soy sauce flavor and mild seasoning. Not chickenlike in texture or flavor.
'FISH' FILLETS											
Gardein Plant-Based F'sh Filets	●	▲	**$4.00/10.1 oz.** ($1.33)	2 pieces	200	1.0	9	12	2	360	Crispy batter coating. Interior more chewy than flaky. Mildly seasoned and slightly salty.
Good Catch Plant-Based Fish Burgers Classic Style	●	▲	**$6.00/8 oz.** ($3.00)	1 burger	160	0.5	21	9	2	500	Thick and moist, with big lemon and green onion flavors; slight garlic and salt. A bit chewy but decent overall.
Sophie's Kitchen Plant-Based Fish Fillets	●	●	**$6.90/8.8 oz.** ($1.73)	1 piece	180	1.0	8	20	3	240	Slightly mushy, fishlike cake. Tastes better than it looks. Moderate ginger flavors.
'PORK' SAUSAGES											
Beyond Meat Beyond Breakfast Sausage Classic Plant-Based Patties	●	▲	**$4.75/7.4 oz.** ($1.58)	2 patties	180	4.5	11	6	2	270	Small, thick patty. Slightly crispy and moist. Moderately salty, with char flavor, fennel note, and slight heat.
MorningStar Farms Incogmeato 100% Plant Protein Breakfast Sausage Links	●	▲	**$6.00/6.5 oz.** ($1.50)	2 links	100	1.0	6	5	3	250	Small links with sweet and smoky flavors. Texture slightly chewy and spongy, similar to that of a hot dog.
Lightlife Plant-Based Breakfast Patties	●	▼	**$4.50/7.5 oz.** ($1.50)	2 patties	170	1.0	11	4	1	260	Slightly soft and on the dry side. Harsh rosemary flavor and spiciness dominates.
Beyond Meat Beyond Sausage Plant-Based Links Sweet Italian	▼	▲	**$7.00/14 oz.** ($1.75)	1 link	190	5.0	16	5	3	500	Very large, thick link. Juicy and slightly chewy. Tastes mostly of fennel and salt.
Field Roast Plant-Based Sausages Italian Garlic & Fennel	▼	●	**$6.00/12.95 oz.** ($1.50)	1 link	220	0.5	25	13	0	600	Rubbery and somewhat dry. Spicy heat, with overpowering red pepper and fennel flavors.
Tofurky Plant-Based Original Sausage Italian	▼	●	**$5.00/14 oz.** ($1.25)	1 link	260	1.5	23	9	2	490	Rubbery, large link, with a dry texture. Has sun-dried tomato and big spicy heat flavors; seasoning a bit harsh.

HOW WE TEST: To get the **nutrition score,** CR evaluated the products based on their listed values for calories, fiber, protein, iron, vitamin B12, saturated fat, and sodium. (We show the grams of carbohydrates, though they are not factored into the nutrition score.) We also reviewed the products' ingredients. Those with more processed ingredients were penalized.

For the **sensory score,** a trained panel of sensory experts participated in a blind tasting. They judged the products based on their overall quality (texture and flavor) and how well they mimicked real beef, poultry, pork sausage, or fish. During the initial round of testing, the panel tasted samples of beef, poultry, and pork for reference.

*Serving size weights: burgers, about 4 ounces; breaded chicken, about 3 ounces; chicken pieces, about 2 to 3 ounces; fish, about 2.5 to 4 ounces; sausage, about 1.6 to 3.5 ounces.

THE REMEDY FOR BIG MEDICAL BILLS

AS THE COST OF CARE RISES, EVEN INSURED PEOPLE CAN BE ON THE HOOK FOR HUGE HEALTHCARE EXPENSES. BUT THERE ARE WAYS TO SAVE—BEFORE YOU SEEK TREATMENT AND AFTER.

BY LISA L. GILL

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DOMENIC BAHMANN

WHILE MORE PEOPLE in the U.S. have health insurance than ever—more than 90 percent—medical debt is a problem that has not gone away.

In fact, the reverse is true. Americans have more medical debt in collections—at least $140 billion—than all other types combined, according to a 2021 analysis in the Journal of the American Medical Association. That's up from the $81 million a different study found in 2016. And almost 1 in 5 households has medical debt, owing a median of $2,000, according to 2017 U.S. Census Bureau data.

For people with health insurance, high deductibles and copays are a main cause. Another: "The cost of healthcare has risen dramatically in the last 10 years," says Chuck Bell, senior policy analyst at Consumer Reports. "Every year, people have to reach deeper into their pockets to afford care, leaving many with big unpaid bills."

One reflection of the problem is the high number of people reporting issues with medical debt to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's complaint database. A Utah resident, for example, wrote that a growing stack of medical bills led to late mortgage payments; another, from Florida, said the debt hurt their credit score. "It was only when my health began failing and I began accruing medical bills that I started falling behind [on my] bills," wrote a third, from Louisiana.

You might think older Americans, typically covered by Medicare, are spared the problem, but that's not the case. About 1 in 10 households headed

$
ERROR
H/M/S
+/−
√
MRC
RATE SET
%
M−
TAX−
TAX RATE
TAX+
M+
AC
C
7
4
8

by someone 65 or older has medical debt, according to 2019 U.S. census data. And a 2010 study of people 70 and older found that out-of-pocket medical expenses in the five years prior to their death averaged more than $38,000. That number is almost certainly higher today.

"Almost half of all seniors live on a fixed income of less than $26,000, and many have less than $15,000 in savings," says Frederic Riccardi, president of the Medicare Rights Center, a nonprofit consumer advocacy organization. Medical bills can lead older people to skip buying groceries, delay rent or mortgage payments, or forgo paying utility bills, he says, with these problems faced disproportionally by older Black and Latino people. Some even fail to get needed medical care.

"Older people generally face greater health challenges and thus higher medical expenses," says CR's Bell. "Even if you're on Medicare, you can get snagged in a web of complicated billing and coverage problems."

When those bills wind up in collections, the repercussions can be far-reaching because the debt can hurt your credit score.

But having unpaid medical bills should no longer put your credit score at risk. Starting July 1, the three big credit bureaus—Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion—will change how they handle medical debt on credit reports. Medical debt that has been paid will be removed from credit reports, and medical bills reported to credit agencies won't be added to a report for 12 months, vs. the current six months—long enough for people to work out payment. Beginning in early 2023, any unpaid medical bill of $500 or less won't be added to any person's credit report, ever. "These changes will help millions," Bell says. "But sadly, the problem of high medical costs won't be so easily erased."

Here, we explain ways to help guard against getting high medical bills in the first place, and what to do if you still wind up with one.

GET AHEAD OF BIG BILLS

A little planning can go a long way toward keeping costs under control.

■ **Know the costs up front.** A new law gives people without insurance the right to a "good faith estimate" of charges prior to a planned procedure or test. But there's nothing that stops even people with insurance from asking for that information, says Patricia Kelmar, a health policy advocate at the U.S. PIRG (Public Interest Research Group), a consumer advocacy organization. Share that estimate—which includes everything planned for your medical care—with your insurer. This way you can find out what is covered, how well, and what you may be expected to pay out of pocket.

■ **Speak up at the doctor's office.** More people report being afraid of high medical bills than being afraid of becoming ill, according to a 2019 study from the CFPB. Yet many are also

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T PAY YOUR MEDICAL BILLS WITH A CREDIT CARD

WHEN IT COMES to paying a bill you can't cover with money in your checking account, reaching for your credit card can be automatic. But there are serious reasons to think twice about doing that for medical bills, says Patricia Kelmar, a health policy advocate at the U.S. PIRG (Public Interest Research Group), a consumer advocacy organization.

The first is that you could wind up paying interest on a balance owed after 30 days, which, depending on the size of the debt and how long it takes you to pay it

afraid to discuss cost concerns with their doctors, says Caitlin Donovan, a healthcare policy expert at the Patient Advocate Foundation, which helps consumers with medical bills. Such a conversation could prompt your doctor to find ways to trim expenses, she says—for example, by prescribing less expensive medications or limiting office visits. "But they won't know cost is an issue unless you bring it up."

■ **Make sure your provider has all your insurance information.** You could have two, three, or possibly more types of insurance that could be applied to different aspects of your care. For example, you could have insurance through your employer and also be covered under your spouse's plan. Or you may use traditional Medicare, a supplemental plan, and the Part D drug benefit. Busy doctors' offices and the complexity of insurance can mean information about one or more of those plans doesn't make it onto your record. Confirm with all your providers that your insurance profile in their system is complete, Donovan says.

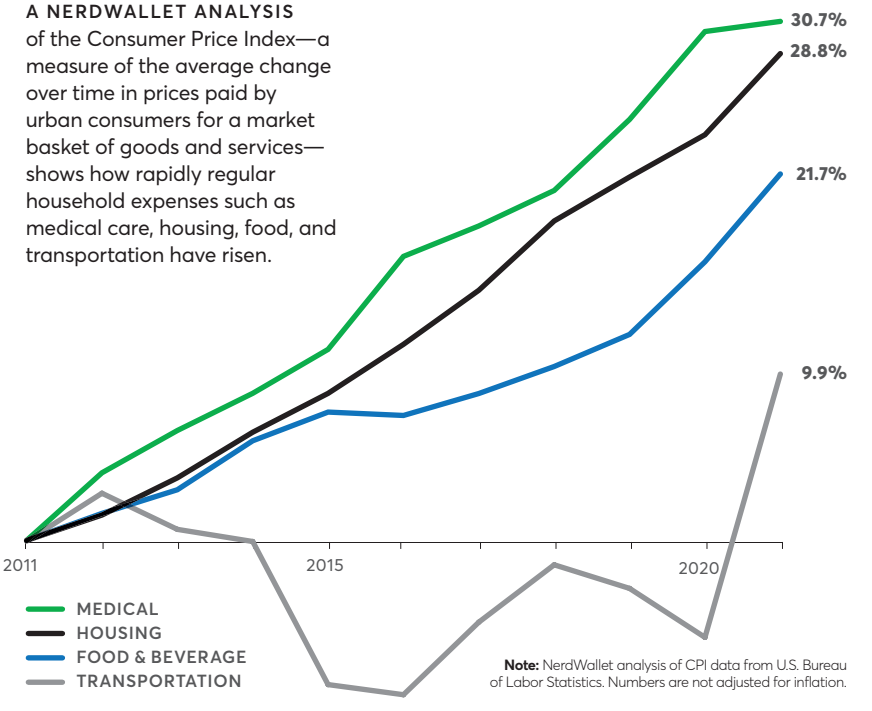
■ **If you're on Medicare, consider buying supplemental insurance.** Traditional Medicare—Part A for hospital care and Part B for other medical care—is what most people sign up for when they turn 65. In addition to premiums, with these plans you are also responsible for deductibles, copays, and coinsurance. To help with those costs, private companies offer coverage known as Medicare Supplement Insurance, or Medigap, which can run about $150 per month, says Jack Hoadley, PhD, research professor emeritus at the Health Policy Institute at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

Supplemental plans cover most of the costs traditional Medicare doesn't—including the 20 percent you'd have to pay for physician bills, Hoadley says. About 1 in 5 beneficiaries of traditional Medicare had no supplemental coverage in 2018, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. "For seniors, it's really the biggest piece of the puzzle to avoiding large medical bills," Hoadley says.

Good to know: It is important to sign up for Medicare supplemental coverage when you first become eligible, Hoadley

MEDICAL COSTS ARE RAPIDLY RISING

A NERDWALLET ANALYSIS of the Consumer Price Index—a measure of the average change over time in prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of goods and services—shows how rapidly regular household expenses such as medical care, housing, food, and transportation have risen.



Note: NerdWallet analysis of CPI data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Numbers are not adjusted for inflation.

off, could cost you hundreds or thousands of dollars extra. That compares with payment plans that some hospitals or health-care providers can arrange and that might charge low or no interest, Kelmar says. And, she says, those "will likely let you set an amount that you can afford to pay each month."

Second, paying a medical bill with a credit card means it will be treated like any other debt if it goes unpaid, she says. It can wind up in collections and be reported on your credit report, potentially lowering your score. And because it is credit card debt and not medical debt, it can remain on your report for up to seven years even after it has been paid.

On the other hand, any payment plan negotiated with a hospital or doctor's office will stay off your report altogether if you pay it off.

And if there is a billing or payment problem, you'll have 12 months to resolve it before the debt appears on your credit report.

says. During the initial enrollment period your application will be accepted regardless of your health status. After that you're likely to be asked to get a health screening and could be denied coverage or charged more based on your conditions.

■ **Or consider Medicare Advantage.** If you can't afford a supplemental plan, this might be a less expensive option. Advantage plans cover Parts A and B, and sometimes D, and can cover some of the out-of-pocket costs that traditional Medicare doesn't. Some charge no additional premium beyond what you already pay for Part B.

But because Advantage plans are offered by private companies that contract with Medicare, the network of doctors who take it is usually smaller and can change every year. "It can be a great deal if your doctors participate in the network," Hoadley says.

Plans typically cover drugs and some dental, vision, and hearing care–and sometimes even extra perks, such as gym memberships–and have good coverage for everything else after your deductible is met, Hoadley says. Deductibles can be zero to several hundred dollars, depending on the plan, he says.

Good to know: You can sign up for an Advantage plan around the time you turn 65 regardless of your health status, Hoadley says. But if you decide to later switch to traditional Medicare, you may need a health screening for a supplemental plan to go with it, unless, for example, you moved out of state or your Advantage plan left the market.

■ **See whether you qualify for a Medicare Savings Program.** People with limited income and few assets beyond a home and car could qualify to have deductibles, premiums, coinsurance, and copayments covered, depending on the state where they live. To find out, get contact information for your state Medicare office at medicare.gov/talk-to-someone (select your state from the drop-down menu).

It's possible, too, that you may qualify for Medicaid, especially because most states have expanded eligibility requirements so that coverage isn't limited to those living at or below the poverty line.

WHAT TO DO IF BILLS PILE UP

You can take all the right steps and still get a big medical bill, of course. To keep financial trouble at bay, try the following.

■ **Never automatically pay a hospital or provider bill.** That's because a doctor's office or other facility should first send their invoice directly to your insurance–Medicare, supplemental Medicare, Medicare Advantage, or private insurer–to see how much of the bill will be covered, Donovan says. If you have insurance and get a bill from a hospital or doctor, contact the provider to make sure the bill was submitted to your insurance. Once it has been, your insurer should send you a summary notice or an explanation of benefits that shows any remaining amount owed.

■ **Make sure the bill is correct.** Almost half of all medical bills contain at least one error, including duplicate charges or charges for services you never received, Donovan says. If you face a high bill and are on the hook for some portion of it, request a bill itemizing everything you were charged for and go through it line by line, she says. Find something? Dispute any charges that shouldn't be there with the provider.

■ **Dispute charges related to medical errors.** Say you developed an infection in the hospital after having your knee replaced. At the very least, you should challenge any extra charge for care needed to treat that infection. You could even consider asking about a discount for the original procedure, especially

if the error caused you to miss work or triggered other financial harm. There's no guarantee that even the extra charge will be forgiven or discounted, Donovan says, but it's worth a try.

■ **Ask about a hospital's financial assistance programs.** Nonprofit hospitals must by law provide financial assistance. Some states—California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Washington—require all hospitals to offer discounted or free care to many people with low incomes. Even if you live in another state, "there's no shame in asking for financial help," Donovan says. The CFPB's most recent report on medical debt found that hospitals didn't always let patients know financial assistance was available unless they asked. And a 2019 Kaiser Health News analysis found that almost half of nonprofit hospitals billed patients who would have qualified for free or discounted care.

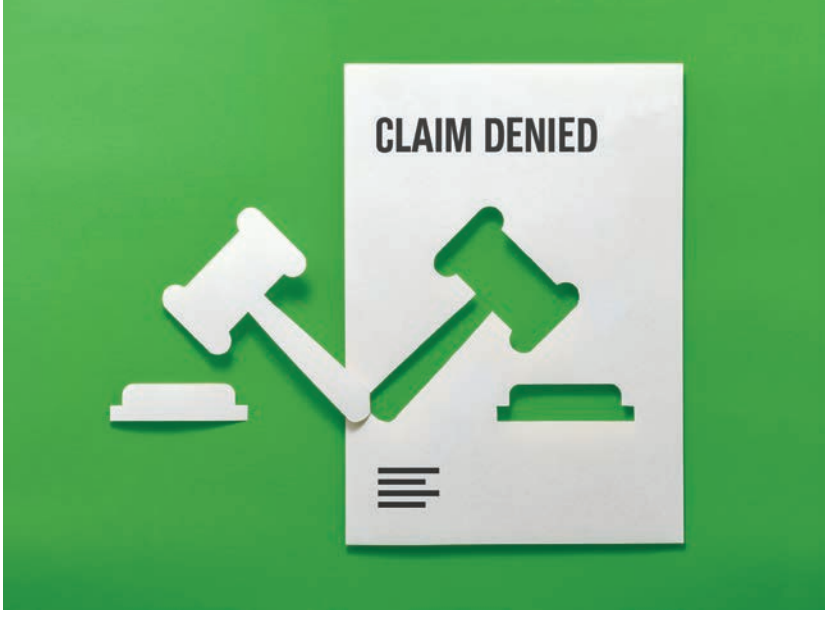
■ **Negotiate.** It's in the provider's interest to work with you to obtain payment, Donovan says. So determine what amount per month you can reasonably pay after accounting for housing, food, fuel, and other necessities. Also ask that no interest be charged. Or if you have the funds, you can also offer a one-time payment for a reduced total bill, she says. Doing so can save you 15 percent or more.

■ **Get help.** Free assistance is abundant. The Medicare Rights Center, for one, can walk you through the process of choosing among types of Medicare plans. Contact the center weekdays during business hours at medicarerights.org or 800-333-4114.

Another option: State Health Insurance Assistance Programs, which are operated by qualified staff and volunteers to help you wade through all the Medicare choices in your state. They can also connect you with your state Medicaid office, says Hoadley, who volunteers in his state of Virginia. Find your state's contact info at shiphelp.org.

Need a hand understanding and negotiating your medical bills? For many, the Patient Advocate Foundation provides those services and more, free of charge. Contact the organization at patientadvocate.org or 800-532-5272.

■ **Consider hiring an advocate.** Look for a medical billing specialist through the Alliance of Professional Health Advocates, at advoconnection.com. Then check to make sure that the specialist you find has credentials from the Patient Advocate Certification Board at pacboard.org/bcpa-certificant-list.



INSURANCE WON'T COVER? HERE'S HOW TO APPEAL.

WHICHEVER TYPE of health insurance you carry, you have the right to challenge denials of healthcare claims, says Caitlin Donovan, health policy expert at the Patient Advocate Foundation. If you sought preauthorization for a healthcare service and were denied that, you can also appeal that decision.

Mistakes can happen at multiple points in the claim filing or preauthorization process, so the first step is to phone your insurer to make sure the decision was not made in error. If it was not, ask to speak to the reviewer behind the decision and request an explanation for the denial. Keep notes because you'll need this information in writing later, Donovan says.

The second step is to file a formal appeal. Enlist your doctor's help to write a letter that explains the necessity of the procedure, and include supporting documents, such as your medical records and studies about the treatment. State your case for why you disagree with the decision to deny, Donovan says.

It could take 30 days or longer to get a response. For a test, drug, or procedure you haven't yet received, you can ask for an expedited review.

If the insurer's determination is to stand by the denial, both Medicare and private insurance must by law state the reason in writing and tell you how to appeal the decision with an independent third party.

If you are dealing with Medicare, there are three additional actions you can take, eventually leading to a hearing before a judge. Consider getting legal help for any of them.

If you get your insurance through your employer, your company's human resources department may be able to help. Ask the department to reconsider the denial, and say why you think it should.

Best Pots & Pans From Our Tests

Want a recipe for replacing worn-out cookware? We've got the expert advice (and top product picks) to help you find the five pieces you really need.

BY MARY H.J. FARRELL

Cuisinart GreenGourmet Hard Anodized 1 Quart Saucepan With Cover $25

$ Lodge Cast-Iron Pre-Seasoned Skillet $25

YOU'RE COOKING WITH the saucepan from the set you've had forever and notice that the handle is loose. Or maybe your skillet wobbles on the burner because the bottom is warped.

You could spend hundreds for a new cookware set, but it might be better to pick individual pieces from "open stock." That way you'll get only what you need and can choose top-rated cookware.

So what exactly do you need? CR reporter Paul Hope, who is also a classically trained chef, suggests a 10-inch nonstick skillet, a 10- or 12-inch cast-iron frying pan, a 5- or 6-quart Dutch oven, a 3-quart saucepan, and a sheet pan. "These are five things you won't find in a typical set, but together they can handle every task in your kitchen," he says.

As you shop, take a hands-on approach, says Tara Casaregola, who oversees CR's cookware tests. "If you can, go to a store to see how the cookware feels. Are the handles comfortable, easy to grab, and tight and sturdy?" And don't overlook the weight, she adds. "If it's heavy, think of how it will feel when it's full of food."

Read on for our top picks for nonstick and cast-iron frying pans, saucepans, and Dutch ovens. We featured our best sheet pans in the February 2022 issue; Digital and All Access members can find them at **CR.org/sheet-pans**. Two winners: The durable, uncoated Nordic Ware Naturals Baker's Half Sheet, $18, delivers even results, and the coated Williams Sonoma Goldtouch Pro Nonstick Non Corrugated Half Sheet, $35, is a snap to clean.

Nonstick Frying Pans

WHILE THE NONSTICK skillets in our list of recommended products start at as little as $20 and go all the way up to $150, you'll want to spend on the higher end if you're looking for a really long-term relationship, Hope says. "With nonstick, price has little to do with the coating and everything to do with the pan under the coating," he says. An inexpensive pan made of lightweight aluminum may perform well out of the box but won't hold up as well as one that's made of sturdier hard-anodized aluminum or stainless steel—and won't have a warranty that's as good, either.

Our durability test is what separates pans at the top of our ratings from those lower down, Casaregola says. Both she and Hope agree that the long-term performance of the coating has less to do with the type (either fluoropolymer, like Teflon, or ceramic) than the overall quality of the cookware.

CARE & CLEANING: The packaging may say that a nonstick pan is dishwasher-safe, but it's actually not recommended. The high water temperature and harsh detergent in a dishwasher can deteriorate the coating. Instead, use hot water, dishwashing liquid, and a soft sponge. Skip cooking spray, which can leave a film. (In our labs, we test nonstick surfaces without additives, but Casaregola recommends following manufacturers' recommendations at home.)

Blue Diamond Diamond Infused Ceramic $20 — **83**
shown on page 44

1 **Green Pan Reserve** $100 — **88**

2 **All-Clad Essentials** $50 — **83**

Are Nonstick Coatings Safe?

TRADITIONAL NONSTICK PANS rely on coatings made with PFAS chemicals, sometimes referred to as "forever chemicals" because they generally don't break down naturally. Some of these have been linked to environmental harms and serious health concerns.

Nonstick coatings are considered safer when they are intact. Choosing your cookware wisely and taking care of it can help keep them that way. "Don't overheat them, scrape them excessively with a metal spatula, or put them in the dishwasher," says James Dickerson, PhD, CR's chief scientific officer. (See "Care & Cleaning," above.)

Pans that ace our nonstick durability test—in which we rub the surface with steel wool 2,000 times—are less likely to deteriorate early on.

Never overheat nonstick pans: Some can release toxic fumes when heated over 500° F in an oven or 650° F on a cooktop. If the coating is scratched or peeling, stop using it.

Some consumers may want to avoid PFAS in cookware entirely. While some PFAS have been phased out, others are widely used. One of those is PTFE, which has long been used in nonceramic nonstick pans. Pans labeled "PTFE-free" in our ratings are likely to have some form of ceramic coating instead, which is a blend of silica (sand) and release agents.

PHOTOS, COOKWARE: JOHN WALSH/CONSUMER REPORTS

Cast-Iron Frying Pans

THESE STURDY PANS last for generations, but they needn't cost a fortune—you can buy the iconic Lodge cast-iron skillet for just $25. Cast-iron pans come uncoated (often "pre-seasoned" with a thin coat of baked-on oil) or coated with enamel, similar to the coating on a Dutch oven. The two types perform similarly in our tests.

A cast-iron pan's ability to retain heat longer than other pans and go directly from stovetop to oven makes it extremely versatile. To evaluate them, Consumer Reports' test engineers bake cornbread, sear steaks, and brown scallops, but you don't have to stop there. You can shift yours from burner to oven to finish off thick chops or a shepherd's pie. They're also great for baking deep-dish pizza.

CARE & CLEANING: To clean an uncoated, pre-seasoned pan, rinse it with water or wipe it clean with a paper towel. For tougher messes, add a little water and simmer on the stove for a few minutes, let cool, and wipe clean. If food starts to stick, reseason the pan by brushing it with a thin coating of vegetable oil, heat it in the oven, then wipe it with a paper towel.

Cast iron can take a lot of punishment, so for stubborn messes, gently scrub the skillet with coarse salt and a splash of water, then wipe dry. For enameled cast iron, follow the tips for Dutch ovens, at right.

Lodge Cast Iron Pre-Seasoned $25 — 75
shown on page 45

3 **Tramontina 80131/066DS** $60 — 80

4 **Crock-Pot Artisan 111988.01** $62 — 70

Dutch Ovens

TYPICALLY MADE OF durable enameled cast iron, Dutch ovens are incredibly versatile, capable of going from stovetop to oven to tabletop without missing a beat. CR tests them by browning meat, baking breads, simmering tomato sauce, and timing how long it takes to bring 4 quarts of water to a near-boil. That's right: If you have a 5- or 6-quart Dutch oven, you don't need a stockpot to make soup or boil pasta. And you won't need a slow cooker, either. Dutch ovens excel at braising—browning large cuts of meat and then simmering or roasting them to perfection.

But their cast-iron construction can make weight a significant concern when choosing a Dutch oven. (In our ratings, we list the weight of all the ones we've tested.) Only one of them—the top-rated Merten & Storck 1873—isn't cast iron. Made of thinner German enameled iron, it weighs in at 7.3 pounds, 4 pounds less than the next-lightest Dutch oven in our ratings.

CARE & CLEANING: Manufacturers recommend letting enameled cast-iron pans cool before washing them with warm water, dish soap, and a soft sponge. Rinse and dry thoroughly. Avoid abrasive cleansers and steel wool, which can mar the enamel surface.

Ayesha Curry Covered Dutch Oven $70 — 80
shown on page 44

5 **Lodge Dutch Oven** $80 — 77

6 **Merten & Storck German Enameled Iron 1873** $160 — 83

POOR — EXCELLENT | RECOMMENDED | CR BEST BUY

Saucepans

IF YOU HAVE a cookware set, it probably came with a 1.5- to 2.5-quart saucepan. (And because that's what we test at CR, those are the sizes pictured here.) Those smaller pots are useful, but if you're buying a new one, you might want something larger: a 3- to 4-quart pot you can use for everything from sauces to soup to pasta, Hope says. He favors saucepans with a glass lid ("so you can see what's going on"), along with a securely fastened main handle and a helper handle on the opposite side.

If yours is a smoothtop or induction cooktop, look for a saucepan with a flat bottom to ensure good contact between the pan and the heat source.

We evaluate saucepans in our tests of cookware sets. Those tests are divided between nonstick and stainless steel sets, with slightly different criteria for each. Both are graded on cooking evenness, simmering, and handle temperature and sturdiness—all key qualities for your next saucepan.

Cuisinart GreenGourmet Hard Anodized 1 Quart Saucepan With Cover $25
shown on page 45

7 **Tramontina Covered Sauce Pan Stainless Steel Tri-Ply Clad 1.5 quart** $40

8 **All-Clad Essentials Essentials Nonstick Cookware Set, 2 piece Saucepan Set with trivets and lids, 2.5 and 4 quart** $130

CARE & CLEANING: For a nonstick pan, follow the cleaning tips on page 46. Wash a stainless steel saucepan with dish detergent and water after it cools down. Avoid abrasive cleansers, which may scratch the surface and leave it prone to staining.

Should You Buy a Star Chef's Pan?

AS ALWAYS, DON'T shop by name alone. The top nonstick frying pan in our tests earns a lofty Overall Score of 88, impressing us with how easily food slides off its surface, its even cooking, and a stay-cool handle. The best of our celebrity brand pans, from Martha Stewart and Rachael Ray, rank quite a bit lower, still in the Very Good range, although Martha's has just middling results for nonstick food release. Ayesha Curry's pan comes in way down in the ratings, with a Good score overall because of so-so nonstick coating durability. (But her Dutch oven rates much higher; you can see it on page 44.)

MARTHA STEWART
Martha Stewart Collection Hard-Enameled $40
75 OVERALL SCORE

AYESHA CURRY
Ayesha Curry Home Collection Porcelain Enamel Nonstick $20
58 OVERALL SCORE

RACHAEL RAY
Rachael Ray Cucina $55
74 OVERALL SCORE

CHEF PHOTOS, FROM LEFT: PAUL MORIGI/GETTY IMAGES; JOHN LAMPARSKI/GETTY IMAGES; STEFANIE KEENAN/GETTY IMAGES

POOR — EXCELLENT | RECOMMENDED | CR BEST BUY

ROAD REPORT

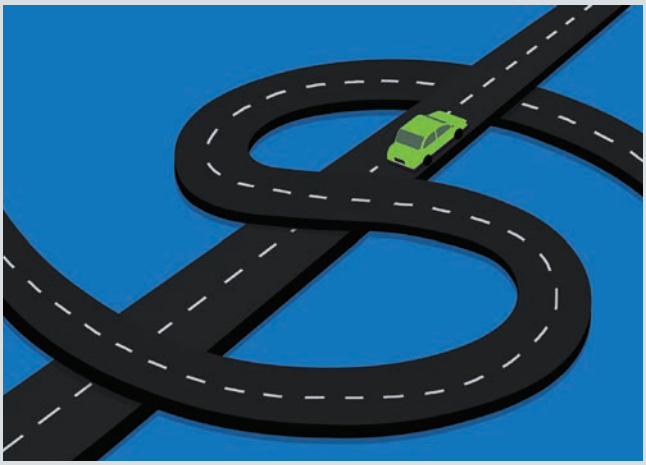
NEWS & EXPERT ADVICE TO KEEP YOU AHEAD OF THE CURVE™

FIRST DRIVE

2023 Genesis GV60

The all-electric GV60 compact SUV shares the same platform as the superb Hyundai Ioniq 5 and Kia EV6. Handling is capable and well-balanced, the ride is smooth, and acceleration is swift. The quiet interior is sleek and uncluttered, and there's a fun, ball-shaped gear selector. The GV60 has tons of storage space between the front seats, but it's less roomy than the EV6 and Ioniq 5. It comes with standard all-wheel drive and has an estimated range of 248 miles per full charge. DC fast-charging capability also comes standard.

BASE PRICE RANGE $50,000-$70,000*
DESTINATION CHARGE $1,095*
PRICE AS DRIVEN $70,000*
*Estimated.



MONEY SAVER

Save When You Buy an EV

Most electric vehicle shoppers have probably heard about the much-touted **tax credits of up to $7,500 on eligible vehicles.** But there are also local and federal incentives and tax rebates available that can make buying an EV even more affordable. Consumer Reports' new **Electric Vehicle Savings Finder** highlights these additional savings based on your ZIP code and the model you're researching. This feature is part of our free membership at **CR.org/cars.**

THE VITAL STATISTIC

7 mpg

Potential increase in fuel economy in a midsized sedan gained by reducing speed from 75 mph to 65 mph. (A small SUV saves 6 mpg with the same change.) The difference could mean about $300 a year, assuming 300 highway miles a week and a fuel price of $4.25 per gallon.

Source: Consumer Reports' testing.

RECALL

Ford and Lincoln

Ford Motor Company is recalling more than 195,000 SUVs and pickups with 3.5L EcoBoost engines because they may leak brake fluid. Affected vehicles are 2016-2017 Ford Expedition and Lincoln Navigator SUVs, and 2016-2018 F-150 pickups. Alerts include a message on the instrument panel, and a brake warning light will appear if fluid becomes low. **WHAT TO DO:** Dealers will correct the problem at no charge. For more information, contact Ford customer service at 866-436-7332.

TIP FROM THE TEST TRACK

Fog lamps are low-mounted lights that illuminate the road closer to the car more effectively than regular low-beam headlights. They can help you see the road better in fog, as well as in other inclement weather conditions. "Fog lamps can help in some foul weather conditions by revealing more of the road, lane markings, and potential obstacles without reflecting light back off of the fog or precipitation," says Jennifer Stockburger, head of operations at CR's Auto Test Center. "But they do not extend the view ahead, so you still need to maintain a slow speed for safety," she says.

PHOTO: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KIERSTEN ESSENPREIS

Find a Great Used Car You'll Love

We highlight the most reliable brands and top models to look for, plus give you tips on how to make sure you're getting a good deal.

by Mike Monticello

HOPPING THE used-car market can be tricky right now. Global supply chain issues affecting the pricing and availability of new cars have also made it harder to find good used models at affordable prices. But with a little patience and research, you can find a safe and reliable vehicle that fits your needs and priorities. Our used-car recommendations are based on testing from our experts, along with reliability survey results that will help you find models from the brands least likely to let you down.

We focused on 5-year-old vehicles because depreciation makes them more affordable than newer used cars, but they're new enough to have important active safety features, such as forward collision warning (FCW), automatic emergency braking (AEB), and blind spot warning (BSW).

We assessed the reliability of brands for used vehicles knowing that you can feel more confident about your purchase if it comes from a dependable brand you can trust. Then we highlighted a model recommended by CR from each of the top brands listed, and did some checking around to make sure those models were available. We also pointed out other reliable years to consider.

"The good news is that there are a variety of safe and reliable used-car choices out there," says Jake Fisher, CR's senior director of auto testing. "We picked an assortment of car types from the most reliable brands, including a few that just might be off your radar."

FACTORS YOU SHOULD CONSIDER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MCKIBILLO

Fuel Economy

Check our ratings at **CR.org/carsatoz** to see if the used model you like fares well against others in its class.

Reliability Score

This indicates how a vehicle's overall problem rate compares with other models from the same year, based on survey responses from CR members about their cars.

Satisfaction Score

CR members tell us each year whether they'd buy their same car again if given the chance. We calculate a score for each model based on those survey responses.

Safety Systems

FCW and AEB were available on older models but were not often standard. So before you buy, make sure your used-car choice has these lifesaving safety features.

Most Reliable Brands for 5-Year-Old Vehicles

OUR BRAND RATINGS chart shows that it's hard to go wrong with any Lexus or Toyota; all of their 5-year-old models have above-average reliability. The average reliability score includes all models for which we had sufficient survey data for the brand. With variety in mind, we've highlighted eight models from our list of the top reliable brands for the 2017 model year.

2017 BRAND RELIABILITY*

		NUMBER OF 2017 MODELS	2017 AVERAGE RELIABILITY
1	LEXUS	5	91
2	TOYOTA	12	84
3	ACURA	2	81
4	INFINITI	3	77
5	MERCEDES-BENZ	5	66
6	NISSAN	9	65
7	BUICK	4	61
8	MAZDA	5	61
9	LINCOLN	4	59
10	VOLKSWAGEN	7	59
11	HONDA	8	58
12	SUBARU	5	55
13	TESLA	2	52
14	KIA	7	51
15	BMW	7	51
16	AUDI	5	49
17	VOLVO	3	49
18	FORD	11	41
19	HYUNDAI	7	38
20	JEEP	4	32
21	CHEVROLET	12	32
22	RAM	2	26
23	GMC	7	26

LUXURY MIDSIZED SUV

Lexus

2017 RX

$34,300-$39,550

22-29 MPG

RELIABILITY

SATISFACTION

OTHER GOOD YEARS
2012-2016

The RX has continued to win owner loyalty over the years by delivering a luxurious driving experience along with one of the strongest reliability records for any vehicle. The smooth V6 and 8-speed automatic give ample power and a commendable 22 mpg overall, while the 450h hybrid gets an excellent 29 mpg overall. All 2017 RXs came standard with FCW, AEB, and adaptive cruise control.

COMPACT SUV

Honda

2017 CR-V

$22,075-$27,375

27-28 MPG

RELIABILITY

SATISFACTION

OTHER GOOD YEARS
2012-2016

The CR-V is appealing because a redesign for 2017—which included the addition of a turbo four-cylinder—made it better. It took to curves with more vigor, gained a more compliant ride, an upgraded cabin, and better fuel economy. Higher trims have four-way lumbar adjustment for the front seats, along with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. FCW and AEB were standard on EX and higher trims.

*Models included in this analysis have sufficient reliability data from CR member surveys. Listed brands also must have at least two qualifying models.

MIDSIZED 3-ROW SUV

Toyota

2017 Highlander

$25,700-$35,373

22-25 MPG

RELIABILITY

SATISFACTION

OTHER GOOD YEARS
2012-2016

The Highlander has shown near-bulletproof reliability for more than a decade. It's relatively easy to maneuver in urban confines thanks to its manageable size, and it's blessed with sure-footed handling and a comfortable ride. For the 2017 model year, the V6 was mated to an 8-speed automatic, returning 22 mpg overall, and the hybrid got 25 mpg. It also received standard FCW and AEB.

MIDSIZED 2-ROW SUV

Nissan

2017 Murano

$19,725-$25,925

21 MPG

RELIABILITY

SATISFACTION

OTHER GOOD YEARS
2012, '14, '16

The Murano has generous accommodations, easy access, and a well-designed infotainment system, which added Apple CarPlay for 2017. The cabin feels luxurious, like the Lexus RX, yet the Nissan costs much less. There's plenty of oomph from a powerful V6, and optional features include a surround-view camera system, FCW, AEB, BSW, and rear cross traffic warning (RCTW).

HOW TO FINANCE A USED CAR

Know Your Credit Score

Determining your credit score before you apply for a loan will help you estimate the interest rate you can expect to pay if you plan to finance the purchase. You'll also be able to spot if an offered rate—perhaps through dealer-arranged financing—is too high. Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion are the three big credit agencies that can provide your credit score.

Get Prequalified

Once you've figured out which car you want to buy, apply for a loan with your bank or credit union. The dealer may or may not offer better terms, but it's best to have financing secured so that you have a baseline before you begin negotiations.

Pay in Cash if Possible

Private sellers almost always prefer to get the full amount in cash, but if you're buying from a dealer, don't mention how you're paying until you've settled on a price. Some dealers anticipate marking up the financing they offer to pad their profit. Paying the full amount in cash, using a bank or cashier's check, for example, will save you money on interest. *–Benjamin Preston*

WORSE — BETTER

More Great Picks

MIDSIZED SEDAN

Subaru

2017 Legacy

$18,850-$23,700

26 MPG

RELIABILITY

SATISFACTION

OTHER GOOD YEARS

2012-'13, 2015-'16

The Legacy blends a comfortable ride, responsive handling, simple controls, and great visibility. Every trim comes standard with AWD, a boon in snowy climes. Yet there's minimal penalty at the pump at 26 mpg overall. The quiet cabin provides plenty of room for the driver, a large rear seat, and an easy-to-use infotainment system. FCW, AEB, BSW, and RCTW were optional features for the 2017 model year.

LARGE SEDAN

Buick

2017 LaCrosse

$19,250-$25,875

24 MPG

RELIABILITY

SATISFACTION

OTHER GOOD YEARS

2012-2016

The LaCrosse is an easygoing road-trip companion that provides plenty of quiet comfort without the premium price of more elite luxury brands. It has a powerful V6, available all-wheel drive, and a history of strong reliability. The 2017 redesign added an 8-speed automatic, which helped improve fuel economy to 24 mpg overall. FCW, AEB, BSW, and RCTW were optional features for the 2017 model year.

LUXURY SEDAN

Infiniti

2017 Q50

$20,375-$30,525

22 MPG

RELIABILITY

SATISFACTION

OTHER GOOD YEARS

2014

The Q50 is invigorating to drive thanks to sharp handling and a 300-hp turbo V6. It was priced similarly to competitors' turbo four-cylinder sedans, which made it a relative bargain. AWD is available and fuel economy, at 22 mpg overall, is reasonable considering its high performance. Outward visibility is quite good for a modern sedan. FCW, AEB, BSW, and RCTW were optional.

COMPACT CAR

Mazda

2017 3

$16,450-$19,550

32-33 MPG

RELIABILITY

SATISFACTION

OTHER GOOD YEARS

2012-2016

The Mazda3 manages to be fuel-efficient and unusually fun to drive for a compact car due to its agile handling. Available in sedan and hatchback body styles, it also boasts a solid reliability history and the choice of a smooth-shifting 6-speed automatic or slick 6-speed manual. FCW, AEB, BSW, and RCTW came standard on the higher Touring and Grand Touring trims in 2017.

HOW TO INSPECT A USED CAR

The best protection is to pay a professional mechanic to inspect a used vehicle before you buy. No matter what, check the following:

Vehicle History Report

Always review the vehicle history report to check for accidents and major repairs. Carfax (carfax.com) and AutoCheck (autocheck.com) are two reliable paid services. VINCheck from the National Insurance Crime Bureau (nicb.org/vincheck) is free.

Body

Check body panels carefully for dents, scratches, rust bubbles, and dull paint. Look for paint on parts that aren't supposed to be painted, which indicates prior damage and bodywork.

Tires

Look for uneven wear that might indicate hard usage or lax maintenance. Assess tread depth to determine if you'll need replacements soon; 4/32-inch deep or less means it's time to buy new tires.

Suspension

Push down on each corner of the vehicle to see if the shocks or struts are worn. If they are, the vehicle may bounce up and down rather than settle. Listen for harsh bumps when taking your test drive.

Under the Hood

Check the belts and hoses for damage. Look for fluid leaks. Ask for service records to be sure the car was well maintained.

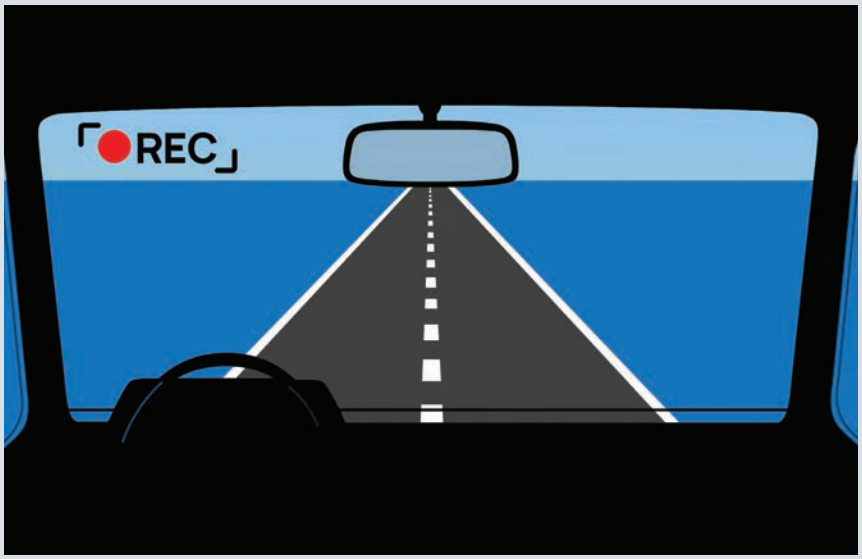
Glass

Look for chips and cracks in the windshield and other windows.

Infotainment System

Sit in the vehicle and make sure your smartphone can pair with the car's Bluetooth. Try Android Auto or Apple CarPlay, along with audio, climate control, and other functions to ensure that they work correctly.
–B.P.

What a Dash Cam Can Do for You



DASH CAMS PROVIDE visual evidence that could clear you in case of a collision or an erroneously issued speeding ticket. They can also monitor the driving of a newly licensed teen, record police interactions, and assist in settling insurance claims.

When comparing models, be sure to consider these factors:

› **Image quality.** A premium model with 4K resolution and image stabilization may capture license numbers and other details well enough to be worth the investment.

› **Rear-facing camera.** These can record activity in the cabin, document rear-end collisions, and serve as a backup camera.

› **Data.** GPS coordinates and speed data can be valuable evidence if you're wrongly charged with a moving violation.

We tried out three dash cams and a smartphone dash cam app, below. Our observations will help you choose the best model for you.

LIOBABA

PRICE PAID: $29

WHAT WE LIKED: This inexpensive model lists features similar to much more expensive cams, including 1080p resolution, a 170-degree viewing angle, and a "super night vision system."

WHAT WE DIDN'T LIKE: As with many low-cost models, it did not live up to its promise. Recordings looked out of focus, and performance at night and in bright sunlight was poor. The menus were challenging to work through, and even the mounting bracket was frustrating to use.

CHORTAU Front and Rear Dual Dash Cam

PRICE PAID: $70

WHAT WE LIKED: An included rear camera can also serve as a backup camera (complete with guide lines). Setup for the windshield-mounted cam is simple, and video quality is good enough to read license plate numbers when stopped.

WHAT WE DIDN'T LIKE: Image resolution when moving and at night was too poor to record in detail, making it unreliable for recording while driving.

NEXTBASE 622GW 4K Dash Cam

PRICE PAID: $400

WHAT WE LIKED: With 4K resolution, image stabilization, and a built-in polarizer, the Nextbase produces images crisp enough to make out fine details like license plates even when in motion. We also like being able to upload video clips to the cloud and an optional service that alerts authorities if the device senses a crash.

WHAT WE DIDN'T LIKE: At this price, we'd like a rear-facing camera included.

DRIVER Dash Cam & Roadside App

PRICE PAID: Free

WHAT WE LIKED: This app for both Apple and Android smartphones has simultaneous forward and driver-facing recording, and detailed trip reporting—including hard braking and accelerating, and real-time speed at each point in the video.

WHAT WE DIDN'T LIKE: Images taken with our iPhone 11 Pro did not capture fine detail at higher speeds.

ILLUSTRATION: KIERSTEN ESSENPREIS. PHOTOS: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

Note: This product evaluation is part of Consumer Reports' Outside the Labs reviews program, which is separate from our laboratory testing and ratings. Our Outside the Labs reviews are performed at home and in other native settings by individuals, including our journalists, with specialized subject matter experience or familiarity and are designed to offer another important perspective for consumers as they shop.

ROAD TEST

EXCLUSIVE RATINGS & REVIEWS
BASED ON TESTING AT CR'S
327-ACRE AUTO TEST CENTER

ELECTRIC SUVs

Hyundai Ioniq 5

The Most Sensible EV So Far

80
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 91

HIGHS Acceleration, quietness, handling, no tailpipe emissions, rapid DC fast-charging ability

LOWS Some audio and climate controls take time to learn

POWERTRAIN 320-hp, dual electric motors; 1-speed direct; AWD

RANGE 256 miles

PRICE $43,650-$54,500 base price + $1,245 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $51,020

THE ALL-NEW, ALL-ELECTRIC Ioniq 5 is one of the most impressive EVs we've tested, with punchy acceleration, agile handling, a reasonably comfortable ride, and generous interior room. Plus, it employs an 800-volt architecture that allows for rapid DC fast-charging in public places, which can reduce charging times on trips.

With 320 hp on tap from front and rear electric motors, which give it all-wheel drive, the Ioniq 5 can zip from 0 to 60 mph in a scant 4.7 seconds.

We like that drivers can adjust the level of regenerative braking–which slows the car when it's coasting–by tapping paddles behind the steering wheel. The feature recoups energy back to the battery that would otherwise be lost during braking. The EPA-rated driving range is 256 miles for our AWD test model and 303 miles for rear-wheel-drive versions.

The Ioniq 5's interior has a clean, minimalist design and uses eco-friendly materials on the seats, door trim, and headliner. The flat floor and center console that appears to float in the air make for a roomy cabin. Most of our testers found that the front seats offered a nice mixture of plushness and support, but some felt the seatback was too narrow. The rear seat has easy access, with loads of legroom and a generous amount of recline, though headroom can get tight for taller occupants.

Despite the car's futuristic vibe, the controls are mostly user-friendly and include some very helpful EV-specific displays. The twist-lever gear selector does take some getting used to.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, RCTW, LDW, LKA, and adaptive cruise control all come standard.

LUXURY 3-ROW SUVs

Infiniti QX60

Improved Upscale Family Hauler

65
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 84

HIGHS Ride, quietness, acceleration, fit and finish

LOWS Stop/start system's delay, long wet stopping distances

POWERTRAIN 295-hp, 3.5-liter V6 engine; 9-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive

FUEL 21 mpg on premium

PRICE $46,850-$63,250 base price + $1,025 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $59,835

THE REDESIGNED QX60 is now better equipped to compete with its rivals, thanks to its refined and robust powertrain, modern infotainment system, and high-quality cabin. But its Overall Score suffers due to Infiniti's history of below-average predicted reliability with redesigned models.

The QX60's energetic V6 is mated to a smooth-shifting automatic, replacing the continuously variable transmission that sapped driving enjoyment from its predecessor. The new QX has sharper handling, which together with the improved powertrain makes it more engaging to drive, yet the ride is still comfortable.

The stop/start system–which is intended to save fuel by shutting off the engine at stop lights–is unusually slow to restart after you take your foot off the brake pedal, which we found disconcerting. At least the button to turn the system off is easy to reach.

The cabin has a luxurious look and feel, thanks to lots of soft-touch surfaces, felt-lined bins, and fine stitching. The standard 12.3-inch infotainment screen is fairly easy to navigate, but the touch "buttons" for the climate controls proved a sore spot, because it's almost impossible to accomplish some tasks without taking your eyes off the road.

The front seats are comfy, with just enough bolstering to hold you in place through corners. The second-row seats are raised, stadium style, yet there's still plenty of headroom. As with most midsized three-row SUVs, the rearmost row is fit for only small children or preteens.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, RCTW, and LDW come standard.

PHOTOS: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

Safety Term Glossary: AEB automatic emergency braking; **BSW** blind spot warning; **FCW** forward collision warning; **LDW** lane departure warning; **LKA** lane keeping assistance; **RCTW** rear cross traffic warning.

LARGE SUVs

Jeep Wagoneer

A Luxurious Gas Guzzler

63
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 74

HIGHS Ride, quietness, acceleration, interior room, fit and finish

LOWS Fuel economy, agility, braking

POWERTRAIN 392-hp, 5.7-liter V8 engine; 8-speed automatic transmission; four-wheel drive

FUEL 15 mpg on regular

PRICE $58,995-$76,995 base price + $2,000 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $81,630

THE ALL-NEW WAGONEER is a super-comfortable, three-row cruise ship with a brawny powertrain and a well-finished cabin. But this throwback to a nearly bygone era of enormous, fuel-sucking vehicles is about $10,000 more than its main rivals, and that's before you factor in the absurdly high $2,000 destination charge.

The powertrain is a guilty pleasure. The 5.7-liter V8 pumps out a throaty 392 hp, scooting this behemoth down the road with surprising alacrity, and the transmission is supremely smooth. Even with a cylinder-deactivation system that runs the engine as a four-cylinder at times to save gas, the Wagoneer gulped fuel at 15 mpg overall–at the low end, even for a large SUV.

The Wagoneer sails down the highway with grand stability, and the suspension soaks up large potholes with ease. It was only on bumpier back roads that we noticed some pickup-truck-like jitteriness. It does a good job managing its weight through turns, but this is not a vehicle that likes to be pushed when the road gets twisty. Worse, it doesn't stop very well, tying the recently tested Ford Bronco with some of the longer stopping distances we've recorded in years.

Step up into the tall cabin and there's room aplenty, along with leather and stitched surfaces. Yet the level of sumptuousness doesn't quite match the price. The front seats are wide and supportive, and the second-row seat is spacious, if a bit short on leg support. Squeeze in back and you'll find one of the roomiest and most comfortable third-row seats on the market.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, RCTW, LDW, and LKA come standard.

SMALL PICKUP TRUCKS

Ford Maverick

A Civilized Little Workhorse

74
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 78

HIGHS Competent ride and handling, maneuverability, visibility, access, controls

LOWS Noise, cabin quality

POWERTRAIN 250-hp, 2.0-liter turbo 4-cylinder engine; 8-speed automatic transmission; AWD

FUEL 23 mpg on regular

PRICE $19,995-$29,880 base price + $1,495 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $29,965

THE MAVERICK IS a new small pickup based on Ford's Escape SUV. Starting at about $20,000, it occupies an expanding niche of lower-priced small pickups. With a reasonably smooth ride and decent fuel efficiency, it outscores every pickup in its class, except the larger and more expensive Honda Ridgeline.

The Maverick is better-suited to "truck stuff" than the similarly sized Hyundai Santa Cruz is. For instance, the Ford's 4.5-foot-long bed has about one-and-a-half times the volume, and the bed's low height makes it easier to load. Owners are likely to appreciate the handy sliding tie-down rings and in-bed lighting.

We tested an XLT with the turbo four-cylinder (we'll test the hybrid soon). The engine is well-matched to the Maverick's weight, with just enough reserve power for most driving situations, though at times it can sound wheezy and uninspiring.

The ride is firm, but it's less unruly on bumpy roads than most pickups. And although the Maverick doesn't turn into corners with the verve of the Santa Cruz, it proved utterly secure around our track.

The utilitarian interior is full of cheap-feeling plastic pieces, which isn't surprising given its price. The controls, such as the climate system's large knobs and physical buttons, are a breeze to use.

Unlike most pickups, it's easy to get in and out of the Maverick due to its low floor height. The front seatbacks are well-bolstered, but thigh support is lacking. The rear seat has plenty of headroom, but legroom is tight for taller passengers, and the upright seatback can get uncomfortable on long trips.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, and LDW come standard, but BSW and RCTW are optional.

Safety Term Glossary: AEB automatic emergency braking; **BSW** blind spot warning; **FCW** forward collision warning; **LDW** lane departure warning; **LKA** lane keeping assistance; **RCTW** rear cross traffic warning.

Ratings > **From Small to Colossal** This month's lineup ranges from the mighty mite Maverick to the humongous Wagoneer, with the Hyundai EV and Infiniti SUV in between.

Make + Model	Overall Score	Survey Results		Road-Test Results												Active Safety Features			
		Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Road-test score	Overall mpg	Seat comfort, front/rear	Usability	Noise	Ride	Fit + finish	Routine handling	Avoidance-maneuver speed, mph	Acceleration, 0-60 mph, sec.	Dry braking, 60-0 mph, ft.	Cargo volume, cu. ft.	FCW	AEB, pedestrian	AEB, highway	BSW
PICKUP TRUCKS $25,000-$45,000																			
✓ **Honda Ridgeline** 3.5L	82	↑	⇈	83	20	↑ /	↑	↑	↑	↑		53.5	7.3	134	NR	S	S	S	O
✓ **Ford Maverick** 2.0T	74		↑	78	23	↑ /	⇈				↑	52.5	7.1	127	NR	S	S	S	O
✓ **Ford Ranger** 2.3T	62	↑		55	20	/			↓			47.0	7.4	143	NR	S	S	S	O
Hyundai Santa Cruz 2.5T	59	↓	↑	77	24	↑ /	⇈	↑	↑	↑	↑	51.5	6.6	132	NR	S	S	O	O
Nissan Frontier 3.8L	54	↓	↑	67	18	/ ↓	⇈		↓			52.0	7.5	128	NR	S	S	S	O
Toyota Tacoma 3.5L	51			42	19	↓ / ↓	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	46.0	8.2	146	NR	S	S	S	O
Chevrolet Colorado 3.6L	45	↓	⇊	61	18	↓ /	⇈		↓			48.5	7.5	132	NR	O	–	–	–
Jeep Gladiator 3.6L	38	↓	↑	52	18	/	↑	↓			↓	49.5	7.8	135	NR	O	–	O	O
3-ROW SUVs $55,000-$65,000																			
✓ **Lexus RX350L** 3.5L	83	↑	↑	80	20	⇈ / ↑		⇈	⇈	⇈		51.5	7.7	136	31.0	S	S	S	S
✓ **Acura MDX** 3.5L	76	↑	↓	77	20	⇈ / ⇈	⇊	↑	↑	⇈	↑	53.5	7.4	139	37.0	S	S	S	S
Infiniti QX60 3.5L	65	↓	↑	84	21	↑ / ↑	↑	↑	↑	⇈	↑	52.5	6.7	138	41.0	S	S	S	S
Jeep Grand Cherokee L 3.6L	63	↓	↑	75	19	↑ / ↑		↑	↑	↑		50.5	8.8	141	45.0	S	S	S	S
Buick Enclave 3.6L	62	↓		87	18	↑ / ⇈		⇈	↑	↑	↑	53.5	7.4	130	48.5	S	S	O	S
Volvo XC90 2.0T	56	⇊		84	20	⇈ / ⇈	↓	↑		⇈		52.5	7.7	126	35.0	S	S	S	S
3-ROW SUVs $65,000-$85,000																			
✓ **BMW X7** 3.0T	81		↑	94	22	⇈ / ⇈		⇈	↑	⇈	↑	52.5	6.5	136	26.0	S	S	O	S
✓ **Ford Expedition Max** 3.5T	73		↑	73	16	↑ / ⇈	⇈	↑		↑	↓	46.5	7.3	143	66.0	S	S	S	S
Jeep Wagoneer 5.7L	63	↓	↑	74	15	⇈ / ↑		⇈	↑	⇈		48.5	7.1	149	63.5	S	S	S	S
Lincoln Navigator 3.5T	63		↑	65	16	/ ⇈		⇈	↑	⇈	↓	47.0	6.2	144	56.0	S	S	S	S
Chevrolet Tahoe 5.3L	39	⇊		73	17	⇈ / ⇈	↑	⇈	↑	↑		49.0	7.8	145	58.5	S	S	O	O
ELECTRIC SUVs $55,000-$65,000																			
✓ **Ford Mustang Mach-E**	82	↑	⇈	78	90 [1]	↑ / ↑		⇈		↑	⇈	52.0	5.3	136	29.5	S	S	S	S
✓ **Hyundai Ioniq 5**	80		↑	91	98 [1]	↑ / ↑		⇈	↑	↑	↑	53.0	4.7	131	28.5	S	S	S	S
Tesla Model Y	59	⇊	⇈	90	121 [1]	⇈ / ↑	⇊	↑	↓	↑	⇈	54.5	4.7	121	25.0	S	S	S	–
Volkswagen ID.4	59	↓	⇈	83	93 [1]	⇈ / ↑	⇊	⇈	↑	↑	↑	52.5	5.8	134	31.0	S	S	S	S

> Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/cars. When you're ready to buy, configure the vehicle and find the best price in your area by clicking the green "View Pricing Information" button on the model's dedicated page.

HOW WE TEST: Recommended models did well in our **Overall Score,** which factors in **road-test results, predicted reliability, owner satisfaction,** and **advanced safety,** which includes crash-test results and the availability of crash-prevention features, such as forward collision warning, automatic emergency braking, pedestrian detection, and blind spot warning. A dash (–) means no such safety system is offered; O means that it's optional on at least some trim levels; S means that the feature is standard on all trims. NR indicates not rated. We deduct points if a model's gear selector lacks fail-safes.

WORSE ⇊ ↓ I ↑ ⇈ BETTER | ✓ RECOMMENDED | GREEN CHOICE

[1] Miles-per-gallon equivalent (MPGe).

Index

THIS INDEX LISTS ALL THE ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THE MAGAZINE OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS (INCLUDING THIS ISSUE). FOR INDEXES COVERING THE PAST FIVE YEARS, GO TO CR.ORG/5YEARINDEX.

A

Air conditioners, window ... Jun 22, 12
Air fryers ... Jul 21, 17; May 22, 18
  ratings ... May 22, 21
  root vegetable recipes ... Nov 21, 13
Air mattresses ... Jul 21, 14
Air purifiers ... Aug 21, 21
  ratings ... Aug 21, 25; Nov 21, 34
Air travel, COVID-19 safety ... Oct 21, 50
Alcohol-free drink recipes ... Jan 22, 17
Amazon Echo Show 10 speaker ... Aug 21, 17
Antennas, TV ... Dec 21, 16
Antibiotics, chain
restaurant use ... Oct 21, 7; Feb 22, 7
Apple AirPods ... Mar 22, 14
Appliances
  Brand Reliability Rankings ... Aug 21, 48
  kitchen, space-saving ... May 22, 16
  replace or repair ... Aug 21, 42
  shopping for ... Aug 21, 46

AUTOMOBILE RATINGS

Acura MDX ... Aug 21, 64
Audi A3 ... May 22, 58
Buick Envision ... Aug 21, 64
Cadillac Escalade ... Oct 21, 64
Chevrolet Bolt EUV ... Oct 21, 64
Chevrolet Corvette ... Sep 21, 64
Ford Bronco ... Mar 22, 60
Ford Bronco Sport ... Jul 21, 63
Ford Maverick ... Jun 22, 58
Ford Mustang Mach-E ... Aug 21, 63
Genesis G80 ... Jul 21, 64
Genesis GV70 ... Dec 21, 60
Honda Civic ... Nov 21, 64
  Si ... May 22, 57
Hyundai Elantra Hybrid ... Oct 21, 63
Hyundai Ioniq ... Oct 21, 63
Hyundai Ioniq 5 ... Jun 22, 57
Hyundai Santa Cruz ... Jan 22, 60
Hyundai Santa Fe ... Jul 21, 64
  Hybrid ... Nov 21, 63
Hyundai Tucson ... Sep 21, 63
  Hybrid ... Nov 21, 63
Infiniti QX60 ... Jun 22, 57
Jeep Grand Cherokee L ... Dec 21, 60
Jeep Wagoneer ... Jun 22, 58
Kia Carnival ... Sep 21, 64
Lexus NX ... Mar 22, 59
Mitsubishi Outlander ... Sep 21, 63
Nissan Frontier ... Feb 22, 60
Nissan Pathfinder ... Nov 21, 64
Nissan Rogue ... Jul 21, 63
Polestar 2 ... Aug 21, 63
Tesla Model S ... Feb 22, 60
Toyota Corolla Cross ... May 22, 58
Toyota Tundra ... Mar 22, 59
Volkswagen Golf GTI ... May 22, 57
Volkswagen ID.4 ... Mar 22, 60
Volkswagen Taos ... Jan 22, 60

AUTOMOBILES & AUTO EQUIPMENT

Automatic emergency braking ... Mar 22, 7
Batteries ... Jul 21, 62
Big trucks ... Jul 21, 56
Brand Report Card ... Apr 22, 14
Buying tips, new & used ... Apr 22, 22
Coming in 2022 ... Apr 22, 20
Dash cams ... Jun 22, 56
Deer season safety ... Oct 21, 17
Driver assistance systems
  crash data reporting ... Oct 21, 7
  safety ... Jul 21, 7
Driver monitoring systems ... Apr 22, 28
Efficiency ... May 22, 5; Jun 22, 5
Electric vehicles ... Aug 21, 7; Apr 22, 32
Fuel economy ... Nov 21, 7
Gas-saving tips ... Apr 22, 99
Hybrids
  benefits of ... May 22, 56
  braking ... Jan 22, 59
Insurance
  fairness ... Jan 22, 7
  tips ... Aug 21, 62
Key fobs, replacing ... Oct 21, 62
Lease deals ... Nov 21, 17
Lending fairness ... Mar 22, 7
Loans ... Jan 22, 52
Make your car last ... May 22, 50
New cars
  fair deals ... Feb 22, 58
  reviews, 2022 ... Apr 22, 48
Older car care ... Mar 22, 58
Owner satisfaction ... Mar 22, 52
  brand ratings ... Mar 22, 57
Packing for travel ... Dec 21, 16
Ratings, 2022 ... Apr 22, 38
Rear-seat safety ... Feb 22, 52
  ratings ... Feb 22, 57
Reliability ... Jan 22, 46; Apr 22, 86
  predictions ... Jan 22, 50
  ratings ... Apr 22, 88
  brands ... Jan 22, 48
Repair
  dent repair ... Aug 21, 15
  DIY ... Oct 21, 50
  professional ... Oct 21, 56
RVs ... Aug 21, 16
Safety systems
  coming soon ... Aug 21, 56
Small trucks ... Nov 21, 62
Smart buys 2022 ... Apr 22, 16
SUV alternatives ... Dec 21, 59
Theft prevention ... Sep 21, 62
Tires ... Dec 21, 54
  Goodyear G159 danger ... Sep 21, 56
  ratings ... Dec 21, 56
Top Picks for 2022 ... Apr 22, 8
Trucks timeline ... Jul 21, 14
Used cars ... Nov 21, 56; Apr 22, 82; Jun 22, 50
  under $10,000 ... Nov 21, 61

B–D

Baby food safety ... Jan 22, 7
Backpacks for travel ... Feb 22, 17
Banking online ... Nov 21, 44
Blenders ... Aug 21, 17
Bouquets ... May 22, 14
Brainpower ... Jun 22, 22
Bread ... Oct 21, 36
  ratings ... Oct 21, 40
  timeline ... Oct 21, 14
Broadband internet ... Aug 21, 26; Oct 21, 7; Feb 22, 7
  provider ratings ... Aug 21, 35
Can openers, electric ... Mar 22, 16
Cell phone service plans ... Feb 22, 46
  ratings ... Feb 22, 50
Cereal ... Feb 22, 20
  ratings ... Feb 22, 22
Chicken
  contamination ... Sep 21, 48
  Costco ... Jan 22, 34
  timeline ... Jan 22, 14
Chocolate ... May 22, 12
  dark ... Feb 22, 42
    ratings ... Feb 22, 45
  timeline ... Feb 22, 14
Cleaning tips ... May 22, 11
  dishes ... Oct 21, 14
  pet hair ... Jan 22, 16
  stains ... Mar 22, 40
Cleaning tools ... May 22, 11
Clothing, moth protection ... Sep 21, 17
Cold remedies ... Mar 22, 17
Computers, desktop ... Sep 21, 15
Cookware ... Jun 22, 44
  timeline ... Jun 22, 12
COVID-19
  lessons learned ... Aug 21, 36
  resuming normal activities ... Jul 21, 26
  safe air travel ... Oct 21, 50
  travel tips ... Oct 21, 50
Credit cards ... May 22, 44
Credit reports ... Sep 21, 7
Credit scores ... Jul 21, 36
  apps ... Dec 21, 7
Dark chocolate ... Feb 22, 42
  ratings ... Feb 22, 45
Data privacy ... Sep 21, 7
  dark patterns ... Jul 21, 7
  genetic testing kits ... Dec 21, 7
  Instagram ... Jul 21, 18
Decluttering your home ... Sep 21, 36
Desktop computers ... Sep 21, 15
Disaster preparedness ... Jul 21, 42
Dishes, hand-washing ... Oct 21, 14
Dishwashers
  ratings ... Sep 21, 34; Nov 21, 34
  shopping ... Aug 21, 46
Dollar stores ... Nov 21, 48
  shopping tips ... Nov 21, 54
Door locks ... Dec 21, 13
Dried fruit ... Dec 21, 17
Drugs, shopping online ... May 22, 22
Dumbbells ... Oct 21, 17

E–G

Earbuds, Apple AirPods ... Mar 22, 14
E-bikes ... Mar 22, 46
  ratings ... Mar 22, 50
Electric can openers ... Mar 22, 16
Emails, unwanted ... Feb 22, 16
Entertaining guests ... Nov 21, 36
  timeline ... Nov 21, 14
Exercise mats ... Nov 21, 14
Fast food
  healthier breakfasts ... Dec 21, 14
  Mexican ... Mar 22, 18
Fitness at home ... Sep 21, 42
Food safety ... May 22, 5
"Forever chemicals"
  in food packaging ... May 22, 36; Jun 22, 5
  in water ... Jul 21, 7; Nov 21, 7
Furniture safety ... Aug 21, 19; Sep 21, 7; Nov 21, 7; Mar 22, 30
Generator ratings ... Jul 21, 49; Nov 21, 35
Genetic testing privacy ... Dec 21, 7
Gift baskets ... Feb 22, 13
Gift cards ... Mar 22, 14
Green timeline ... Sep 21, 14
Grills ... Jun 22, 11
Grocery delivery services ... Jul 21, 15

H–K

Hamburgers, how to grill ... Jun 22, 11
Healthy eating ... Jan 22, 32
Hearing aids ... Dec 21, 48
Heating system reliability ... Feb 22, 15
Herbs, growing your own ... Jun 22, 13
Holiday lights ... Dec 21, 15
Home inspections ... Feb 22, 38
Home organizing ... May 22, 30
  and recycling ... Sep 21, 36
  timeline ... May 22, 12
Home refinancing ... Feb 22, 41
Home revival guide ... Nov 21, 26
Home safety ... Mar 22, 24
Homebuying ... Feb 22, 34
Hot wings, cooking at home ... Jul 21, 17
Humidifiers ... Oct 21, 13; Dec 21, 20
  ratings ... Dec 21, 23
Infant sleep product safety ... Aug 21, 7; Dec 21, 7; Mar 22, 31; May 22, 5
Insect repellents ... Jul 21, 21
  ratings ... Jul 21, 24
Insurance fairness ... Jan 22, 7
Interior paints
  disposal ... Sep 21, 41
  ratings ... Nov 21, 35
Kitchen fire safety ... Nov 21, 16
Kitchen upgrades ... Sep 21, 26
  appliances ... Sep 21, 32
    shopping ... Aug 21, 46
    space-saving ... May 22, 16
  countertops ... Sep 21, 30
    material ratings ... Sep 21, 35
  flooring ... Sep 21, 31
    ratings ... Sep 21, 35
  lighting ... Sep 21, 29
  storage ... Sep 21, 27
Knives ... Jan 22, 13

L–P

Laundry
  cost savings ... Sep 21, 22
  green washer ratings ... Sep 21, 25
  washer-dryer pairs ... Jun 22, 15
Lawn care
  tools, battery-powered ... Jul 21, 19
Mattress ratings ... Feb 22, 32
Meat
  plant-based ... Jun 22, 30
    ratings ... Jun 22, 36
  safety tips ... Sep 21, 53
Medical bills, surprise ... Jun 22, 38
Microwaves, shopping ... Aug 21, 46
Milk, labeling ... Aug 21, 18
Milk frothers ... Mar 22, 13
Mixer attachments ... Sep 21, 16
Online banking ... Nov 21, 44
Outdoor rugs ... Aug 21, 14
Package theft prevention ... Mar 22, 16
Paints, interior, ratings ... Nov 21, 35
Peloton ... Sep 21, 45
Personalized pricing ... Jun 22, 5
Pet trackers ... May 22, 15
Photography tips,
smartphone cameras ... Jul 21, 50
Pillows
  adjustable ... Sep 21, 13
  ratings ... Feb 22, 33
Pizza ovens ... Nov 21, 18
Plastics ... Oct 21, 42
  recycling ... Oct 21, 44
Prescriptions, shopping online ... May 22, 22
Price matching ... Jan 22, 15
Printers ... Jan 22, 20
  ratings ... Jan 22, 22

R–S

Ranges
  ratings ... Sep 21, 34
  shopping ... Aug 21, 46
Recalls, urging reforms ... Aug 21, 7
Refrigerators
  ratings ... Sep 21, 33
  shopping ... Aug 21, 46
Rice, stovetop cooking ... Feb 22, 18
Right to repair ... Sep 21, 7; Mar 22, 7
Robocalls ... Jan 22, 7
Rugs, outdoor ... Aug 21, 14
RVs ... Aug 21, 16
  Goodyear G159 tire danger ... Sep 21, 56
Salad ... Aug 21, 50
  dressings
    labeling ... Aug 21, 53
    ratings ... Aug 21, 54
  timeline ... Aug 21, 14
Salmonella in chicken ... Sep 21, 48
Scams ... Mar 22, 34
  prevention ... Mar 22, 38
  timeline ... Mar 22, 14
Self-care ... Jan 22, 24
Sheet pans ... Feb 22, 14
Shopping tips ... Oct 21, 26
Sink filters ... Jan 22, 18
Sleep ... Feb 22, 24
  mattress ratings ... Feb 22, 32
  pillow ratings ... Feb 22, 33
  trackers ... Jan 22, 40
Smart thermostats ... Jan 22, 14
Smartphones
  under $700 ... Jun 22, 18
    ratings ... Jun 22, 21
  camera ratings ... Jul 21, 54
  contactless payments ... Nov 21, 14
  if lost ... May 22, 13
  photo tips ... Jul 21, 21
  ratings ... Jul 21, 54
  service plans ... Feb 22, 46
    ratings ... Feb 22, 50
Smoothies, healthy ... Jun 22, 14
Snack bars ... Sep 21, 18
Snow blower problems & solutions ... Dec 21, 18
Sound systems ... Oct 21, 15
Soundbars ... Mar 22, 20
  ratings ... Nov 21, 34; Mar 22, 23
Speakers, Bluetooth ... Aug 21, 17
Spices
  DIY ... Dec 21, 46
  heavy metals in ... Dec 21, 38; Feb 22, 7
    safety ratings ... Dec 21, 42
Stain guide ... Mar 22, 40
Student loans, resuming payments ... Sep 21, 17
Sunscreens ... Jul 21, 21
  ratings ... Jul 21, 23
Supplements
Surprise medical bills ... Jun 22, 38

T–W

Tea ... Feb 22, 16
Thermostats, smart ... Jan 22, 14
Toaster oven cooking ... Oct 21, 16
Top product picks ... Dec 21, 24
  timeline ... Dec 21, 14
Travel ... Oct 21, 50
Treadmills
  ratings ... Sep 21, 47
TVs ... Nov 21, 20
  antennas ... Dec 21, 16
  mounting ... Jun 22, 16
  ratings ... Nov 21, 24
  shopping for ... Jul 21, 16; Nov 21, 22
Under-sink filters ... Jan 22, 18
Unwanted emails ... Feb 22, 16
Vacuum sealers ... Jul 21, 13
Vacuums ... Oct 21, 20; May 22, 11
  ratings ... Oct 21, 24
Washer-dryer pairs ... Jun 22, 15
Washers, green ... Sep 21, 20
  ratings ... Sep 21, 25
  shopping ... Aug 21, 46
Water
  "forever chemicals" in ... Jul 21, 7
  home tap, under-sink filters ... Jan 22, 18
Webcams ... Aug 21, 13
Wellness ... Jan 22, 24
WiFi ... Aug 21, 30
  extenders ... Aug 21, 17
  mesh routers ... Aug 21, 17

Welcome to Your Next Cookout

We've got a few unusual items that you might want to include—or not

Where's the Beef?
It's mixed in with some chicken and a little pork, too.
Submitted by Anna J. Singer, Tuscaloosa, AL

HOT DOGS
MADE WITH CHICKEN, PORK, BEEF
LOVE TO SAVE HERE.
MADE WITH CHICKEN, PORK, BEEF
BUY 1 GET 1 Free
of Equal or Lesser Price
SAVE 3.79-4.99
STAHL-MEYER ALL BEEF FRANKFURTER
8 or 10-ct. 12 or 16-oz pkg.
QUANTITY LIMITS PER HOUSEHOLD APPLY

We're Seeing Red
This is the right ketchup for those who like their burgers very rare.
Submitted by Kev Shred, via email

The Price Was Already Perfect
Who needs a rollback, anyway?
Submitted by Mike M., Festus, MO

Flies at the BBQ?
These buns may have a little something extra.
Submitted by Ed Lockhart, Vancouver, WA

SHARE

Be on the lookout for goofs and glitches like these. Share them with us—by email at **SellingIt@cro.consumer.org** or by mail to Selling It, Consumer Reports, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703—and we might publish yours. Please include key information, such as your name and location.

Timely Advice & Tips Delivered Straight to Your Inbox

Sign up for CR's **FREE** email newsletters, each packed with the information you need to shop smart, stay informed, and keep safe.

What's New

Smarter

Home

Cars

ShopSmart®

Health

Food

Money

Salud y Bienestar

Digital Privacy

cr.org/getnewsletters

CR

CRM26C4N